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TEN LECTURES ON ART

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BY

EDWARD J. POYNTER, R.A.

DIRECTOR FOR ART, SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT,
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Dedicated

TO

SIR FREDERICK LEIGHTON, P.R.A.

PREFACE.

It is rather through the accident of my having been offered the Slade Professorship at University College, than through any conviction on my part that I had a call to instruct the public by my pen, that the ten lectures which compose this book came to be written. The first of the series, it is true, was delivered at the College before my appointment there was talked of, but I was much pressed to do it, and I undertook it with much misgiving. My position as Professor seemed to require a certain number of formal lectures, although practical instruction in art was the main object of my appointment; and these led to others being given outside for the benefit of a public which lies in wait for any one they can catch for an evening's instruction. As regards the lectures, they speak for themselves. In spite of difficulties attending the subject, I have come to the conclusion that it is much easier to write

about art than to practise it; and am led to the further conclusion that, as example is always better than precept, the more time I devote to painting in future and the less to public lecturing, the better it will be for my art and for those who are interested in it. The progress that has been made in art during the last ten years has been so rapid, that much of what I said in my first lecture has become obsolete; the remarks I there made on the English school of painting especially, though true enough then, are now, through the rise of a younger school of artists, and the influence they have had upon older men, less applicable. I come to-day from the "varnishing day" of the Royal Academy Exhibition with a pleasant conviction that there is on all sides a more decided tendency towards a higher standard in art, both as regards treatment of subject and execution, than I have ever before noticed; and I have no hesitation in attributing this sudden improvement in the main to the stimulus given to us all by the election of our new President, and to the influence of the energy, thoroughness, and nobility of aim which he displays in everything he undertakes. I was probably the first, when we were both young and in Rome together, to whom he had the opportunity of showing the disinterested kindness

which he has invariably extended to beginners whom he sees to be interested in their work; and to him, as the friend and master who first directed my ambition, and whose precepts I never fail to recall when at work (as many another will recall them), I venture to dedicate this book with affection and respect.

EDWARD J. POYNTER.

April 24th, 1879.

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LECTURES ON ART.

LECTURE I.

DECORATIVE ART.

THIS lecture was written first in 1869 for University College, before my appointment there as Slade Professor. It was afterwards considerably augmented and read at Birmingham, and again, with alterations, at Manchester. As first written it was intended to draw attention to the great "realistic" powers of Michelangelo, the appreciation of which had been forced upon me by a recent visit to Rome, and again by Braun's photographs of the Sistine Chapel, which had just been published. It may be said that, until these were done, there were portions of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel which were completely unknown to all who had not had the rare fortune of seeing the originals from a scaffolding. There is much

in this lecture which has now become commonplace; but at the time it was written the ideas it expresses were not so widely diffused; I publish it almost as it was written, omitting only some too dangerous generalizations.

The qualities of mind required to produce a work of art are two—the power of design, and the power of imitation.

The power of design, again, is of two kinds—constructive and ornamental.

The first of these, or constructive design, has its simplest expression in the form which a savage gives to the ordinary objects of his daily use; in the shape which he gives to his hatchet, or to the rude vessels in which he cooks his food.

The second, or ornamental design, in the patterns which he cuts on the prow of his boat, or traces with a stick on his pottery, or the mud walls of his hut.

The power of imitation shows itself in its simplest form in his wretched attempts to represent animal forms when he introduces them into his decorative efforts, and is therefore necessarily a part of ornamental design.

Thus we may have—first, constructive design pure and simple. Then, ornamental design as applied to constructive work, either purely composed of patterns without

reference to natural forms, or including the imitation of objects, and thirdly, we may have a kind of ornamental design of which the imitation or realization of nature is the principal and most important aim. It is obvious that these three divisions include the whole world of art. It is impossible that I can touch in the space of one lecture on anything approaching to all the various branches of constructive and decorative art, but I will attempt to define the form of truth which I think to be the basis of beauty in all these classes of work.

Among uncivilised peoples the art of design, both ornamental and constructive, is generally far in advance of that of imitation, for whereas their attempts in the latter direction are mostly of a very feeble kind, or so hideous as to be positively alarming, very frequently the forms of their pottery and the patterns with which they decorate it and other things are of a beauty which the most educated artist of taste could not surpass. The art of design, is, or I should say, has been till within the last fifty or sixty years, employed in every work which men's hands produce; for I think I am right in saying that until the progress of civilisation developed the principle that beauty is not essential to our happiness, nothing that man did with his hands was wrought without a desire, however slight, of making it pleasant to look at, at least from his own point of view. It is only since the enormous advance

made in the science of engineering that the necessity of beauty has been completely ignored: but it has now got to this point, that men take a pride in showing how deficient in interest a structure can be made; for they reckon it not only useless, but a waste of time, which we all know means money, to give a single thought to their work which should redeem it from utter hideousness, and help to make it agreeable to the eye; their practical minds revolt from so foolish an idea. I do not wish to discuss now the question of the utility of beauty; I cannot but believe that the beauty of things is of use as far as our happiness in this world is concerned, that some connection between beauty and usefulness there must be, and that that state of things must be wrong, where, in the name of utility and progress we have to suffer from such oppressive nightmares of engineering work as in the last twenty years have grown up in our great cities. The worst and most tasteless efforts in architecture that our great towns afford—and there is no lack of them—are better than the outrages that our men of science inflict on us in their railway bridges and other works; for the former may afford a trifling pleasure, even if of an unreasonable kind, to people ignorant of art, while the latter are only regarded even by the most uncultivated as at best an unavoidable necessity in the progress of things. I do not even believe that the hideousness of these things is a necessity of their construction;

they are done out of a kind of brag to show what a triumph of cheapness engineering can achieve. Besides, I refuse to believe in the necessity for construction of that kind being done entirely from the point of view of cheapness as long as money is wasted in the reckless way that is common in railway affairs, and as long as enormous fortunes are made out of them. But this is a digression from the main subject of my lecture; nor, I think, would any amount of protest, supported by the best arguments in the world, be of any avail against what is considered so necessary by the scientific and practical men who are the pride of our age and of our country.

I will return then to the point I was considering. If we examine the elements of beauty in constructive design we shall find that two things are essential. First, fitness for the purpose which the object made is intended to fulfil; and second, good workmanship in making it.

In those objects which are made simply for use without afterthought of beauty, fitness for the purpose for which they are designed is evidently an essential. Whatever beauty is to be found in this class of objects is inherent, so to speak, in their nature, or rather, I should say, arises from the necessity of their construction. Art, or the artistic sense, has nothing to do with determining their forms, which are entirely suggested by perfect adaptation to their purpose, and vary but little in any country or at any

period of the world's history. Among them I may take as examples the more ordinary implements of agriculture, carpentry, &c.; the form of a spade, or a rake, or a hatchet, or an oar is determined entirely by its appropriateness to the purpose for which it is intended. All this kind of objects has a certain beauty of its own which you will recognize when I speak of them as picturesque, the word usually applied to the beauty of a homely object, but which is none the less a beauty of a very important kind, and is the basis of the beauty of all works of constructive design. Sometimes we find this beauty to be of a very high order, as in the case of the plough, the beautiful lines of which have always been the admiration of artists, and which no alterations of detail can spoil; all kinds of sailing craft, too, will occur to you as possessing beauty of a special kind, which arises entirely from the necessities of their construction, and in nowise because there has been a desire to make a beautiful object, and I could mention many other things of the kind. We have then here what I may term the beauty of fitness, which is really nothing but a form of truth or realism. When a manufactured object is so made as to be perfectly fitted for the purpose for which it is designed, when, as in the case of simple objects of universal use the form has been so modified by continual and gradual improvements (without ulterior intention of making it more beautiful) as to

have all that is requisite and nothing that is superfluous, and when in addition it is constructed in the manner best calculated to make it strong and durable, it has this beauty, which I call the beauty of fitness. Now these are the characteristics of all that kind of work of which the rules are handed down from father to son, or from master to apprentice, and which is called therefore traditional work; consequently, we always find that traditional work has some elements of beauty in it; and this is why artists and people of artistic tastes admire and frequently collect ordinary and perhaps trifling objects of traditional workmanship; things which are often a cause of wonder and sometimes of ridicule to those who have not considered the matter from this point of view, and so cannot see any beauty in common things; but it is the inherent beauty of truth in them which makes them interesting to the collectors.

Such things as these, however, cannot be said to be works of high artistic order; for that a second element of beauty is required, namely, beauty of workmanship. By this I understand that, in addition to a knowledge of a strong and durable method of construction, the workman should have an eye capable of appreciating nice delicacies of proportion, and a trained and skilful hand which shall enable him to execute them with perfect neatness and precision of finish; he must have the power of carrying out to perfection the idea of the design. Good workmanship

is but rarely to be met with at the present time; the workman has got such a habit of doing bad and cheap work, that he cannot (or will not) copy what any skilled workman could have done sixty years ago. A skilled workman now, with rare exceptions, is nothing but a machine, or rather part of the machinery which he serves, repeating from morning to night the same action with the monotonous and perfect regularity of a machine, and utterly incapable of doing anything else, or he is a workman skilled only in concealing the badness of the work he produces. Up to the beginning of this century good work was common; the tradition of it was universal; indeed, it is almost impossible to find any sort of old work which is not constructed on good principles and well executed. But with the rapid increase of trade, consequent on the introduction of steam and steam-machinery, came the desire of rapidly making money, and people soon found out that substituting bad work for good was the best way of doing this, so that the tradition of good workmanship soon began to die out, and has now for some time been extinct, and has to be created again.

Now this beauty of fitness, which is nothing more or less than truth or reality of construction, and which I have spoken of as the first essential, depends on much more than the mere fact that the object is useful for the purpose for which it was intended. It means that

every point should be attended to which is advantageous for that purpose—that every portion of the fabric should have something to do with the construction, and not be introduced falsely for the sake of ornament, or as frequently happens for no purpose at all; also that every portion of the work should be what it appears to be, and do the work which it appears to do. It is not by any means sufficient that a chair should be comfortable and firm to make it a well-designed chair; it must be designed in the best way to produce these and other results. So that a chair made of common materials, and even roughly made (roughly, that is, as regards the finish of its appearance, but finished as regards the perfect fitting and fitness of its parts), may be an object of more intrinsic beauty than the performance of a fashionable upholsterer; and if to this beauty of construction be added beauty of workmanship, it is capable of becoming a true work of art without addition of decoration or ornament of any kind. In nothing more than in our dwelling-houses and furniture is this truth of construction necessary; with the exception of isolated works of good architects and artists, there is nothing in which it is more ignored. And here I must pause to interpolate a vehement protest against the usual application of the words ugly and handsome or beautiful. The very general idea is that plainness is ugliness in these matters

(is not indeed the word plain a synonym for ugly?). I mean that furniture is considered ugly unless it be decorated with scrolls or inlaying or gilding, and has useless and unnecessary curved lines about it. For a thing to be called handsome, the word so commonly applied to houses and furniture, it must have cost a good deal of money; it must be well overlaid with ornament, no matter how debased, inappropriate, or badly done; and it must cost, or appear to have cost, a good deal of money. A house is not considered handsome unless it is covered with stucco or artificial stone ornaments. The architect who in the present day builds for a man of wealth a plain brick-house, whose beauty consists in its proportions, and in the good execution of whatever detail of ornament there may be — such houses as were built by thousands in the last century— is a daring man, and is rarely to be found, for his commissions will be few. Let him run up a shoddy-house, with staring plate-glass windows which let in twice as much light as is wanted, and make one feel as if one were sitting in the chilly open air; let the structure be bad in its proportions, and the rooms, staircases, and passages ugly in shape, and very possibly ill-contrived for comfort, then let him cover it inside and out with meaningless and tasteless ornament, as badly executed as it is designed—above all, let it look as if it cost a great

deal of money—let him, I say, build a thousand such, and he will find a thousand wealthy men to occupy them. If we examine into the cause of this state of things, we shall find it to consist in more than a mere change of fashion. Changes of fashion up to this present century have always been from one kind of good work to another. A Queen Anne house is different from an Elizabethan house, but both are equally strongly and well built, and both have elements of beauty in them from their perfect construction and finish of detail; but the change of style in the present day is quite a different matter; it is a change from a reality to a sham. Is it worth while to consider wherein lies the root of this evil? I think it is; and at the risk of fatiguing you with what may appear to be somewhat too much in the nature of a sermon, I will do so. It is indeed the dread of appearing not to be able to afford handsome things which is at the bottom of the general decline of good work, which we find surrounding us on all sides; it is, combined with the other evil I have spoken of, viz., the desire of rapidly making fortunes, the root of all that is bad and sham in art about us. We English are not naturally an artistic people. Do not let me be misunderstood. I do not mean to say that there are not genuine artists of as high talent in England as elsewhere, and that there are not

connoisseurs of art as distinguished here as elsewhere, but the class of each is a small one compared to the great number of artists whose interest is more in the gain resulting from their labours than in the labour itself, or to the number of those who wish to gain the reputation of connoisseurs without any very genuine love of art to begin with; and it is nothing more nor less than the desire of a people, not by nature artistically gifted, to appear endowed with a taste for the beautiful, which they do not and cannot possess, which causes the vast multiplication of tasteless objects of art and art-manufacture with which we are inundated. Up to the end of the last century those people who had good taste, and the means of cultivating it, did so with great success, and by their patronage of good art at home and the beautiful works they introduced from other more favoured countries, enriched England with many most valuable treasures of art. But, at the same time, those who did not care for art, or who had no means to patronise it, were content to live in a homely way, and desired nothing beyond the rather homely, but always well-contrived and well-executed, things which supplied their wants in the way of furniture and house-decoration. Now, however, that a large proportion of people with much money and little taste consider it necessary to fill their houses with what are called handsome

things, those things are supplied to any extent—to such an extent that it would be impossible for all the skilled workmen in the kingdom to supply good work at the rate at which it is wanted—so in its place is supplied an enormous amount of meaningless and characterless ornamental work, created for this class of people, who think they have satisfied all the demands of good taste by having the latest novelty; the latest novelty generally being something not new in form or design (or if new, only because it has not been done before for very shame), but done by the last new mechanical invention for cheapening labour, or the last new invention for making a flimsy sham take the place of good work not understood or appreciated; and thus the habit of doing nothing but bad work is formed, and ignorance accepts it all through the country. This is, I am afraid, a result of our civilisation, and is as much a part of it, as it is a part of it that the misery of one class of our population is always increasing in proportion to the wealth of another; and just as no amount of charity, however lavishly bestowed in almsgiving, will ever alleviate the miserable condition of our poorer classes, so no amount of what I may call almsgiving to art in the form of buying pictures (no matter how high the prices given) will ever change the poverty-stricken condition in which the larger portion of our community finds itself with regard to

art. This is a theme which it would not be difficult to enlarge upon to a wearisome extent, for the system of making expensive shams take the place and assume the name of beautiful work is so universal at this time and in this country, is so part and parcel of the spirit of the age, that people have really come to believe that progress means this and nothing more. It is thought to be the greatest advance in art and manufacture that this century has made over all that have preceded it, that bad construction and bad workmanship can be so concealed by bad ornament as to be made to pass for a thing of value. This would be distressing enough if we were not proud of it; but we are, and it is this which makes one feel the hopelessness of any serious effort in the cause of truth and beauty. But I have said enough on this point for the present at all events, though the causes I speak of are so real, that I shall have occasion to allude to them and to their effects once or twice again in the course of my lecture.

I will proceed with the consideration of the necessary elements of beauty in constructive design. If I dwell mostly on the beauty of well-constructed furniture, it is not only because it is one of the chief necessities of our lives, but because it serves best as an illustration of all the points I am touching upon, not only in the matter of truth of construction and good workmanship,

but in its capabilities for the application of the second kind of design I spoke of, namely, ornamental design. Also because there has really been a great move made lately by certain architects and artists to furnish and decorate our houses with something better than what upholsterers supply us with so freely; moreover, there are schools of design all over the kingdom for the purpose of educating workmen, where all sorts of devices are tried to supply them with the taste which has been denied them by nature, and of which they have lost the tradition. Now with regard to the cottage-chair I introduced before my last long digression, do not imagine that I mean that it is necessary to have such chairs in our drawing-rooms—beautiful carving and beautiful inlaying are most important additions to the beauty of furniture—but I do assert that an old-fashioned cottage arm-chair, constructed as it is for purely useful purposes, constructed for strength combined with lightness, constructed for durability, constructed for comfort, and above all, constructed by artificers who, knowing that they have no decorative gift beyond a kind of modest and homely taste arising partly from their purely traditional teaching, have not attempted to add decoration which they do not understand,—I say that chairs of this kind might well take the place of most of what we hear called the elegant chairs in our houses. Such furniture as this

chair, which has served me for an illustration, is made with few variations of form from tradition, and being used for the commonest purposes, it has never been thought worth while to art-educate the workman who makes it; and while the furniture remains in its simple, useful, and picturesque form, the workman has not acquired that kind of half-knowledge which is so characteristic of most of the art-workmen who have studied in our schools of design, who have a peculiar knack (I am speaking from experience, as having assisted for two years in inspecting the designs and awarding the medals at the annual national competition of the schools at South Kensington), who have a peculiar gift for seizing upon the half of an idea in a piece of good work or ornament, and that always the wrong half. This is plain-speaking; but if the evil is to be remedied, and we are all interested in the matter that much, it is only by plain-speaking that it can be done. I believe one of the great difficulties in finding good art-workmen to arise from the fact that more money is to be made in other branches of art than in designing or executing the more useful kinds of decorative work. Any man gifted with exceptional facility of design, immediately sets himself to making water-colour drawings or painting pictures, for he finds it a much more rapid means of making money; and this is one of the results of the

notion so deeply ingrained in us—that art consists only in painting pictures. But this whole matter of the working of our Schools of Design and of the condition of our art-workmen is a separate branch of the subject of decorative work, and cannot be dismissed in a few words; to consider the matter properly, and the remedies that might be applied, would require a separate lecture. We have therefore but two kinds of good work in furniture (and other kinds of art-manufacture) possible. One is this almost extinct traditional work I have spoken of, and which remains only in the construction of the most homely objects; and the other is the work of highly-gifted and original minds, which has an independent and higher quality of beauty than the other. Such work as this, I need not say, is very rare, but we fortunately have men among us capable of originating it and if it is rightly understood and followed, it is capable of producing a school doing work scarcely inferior to the original. Rightly understood, I say, for it is only if rightly understood that it is possible for a good tradition of work to arise out of it. I will not dwell on the failures consequent on the efforts such men have made; it is sufficient to say that upholsterers and house-decorators, unless their productions have been under the immediate and careful control of architects or artists of talent, have been just as successful in

seizing the wrong end of every idea which has been given them, as they are in producing the meaningless imitations of the more debased sort of last-century tables and chairs, which constitute most of our drawing-room furniture. I hope I have now said enough to explain my meaning, when I say that Truth is the real basis of Beauty in constructive design; that without reality of construction and good workmanship no object of art-manufacture can have any claim to be considered a work of art.

I will now pass to the consideration of ornamental design. And first I will treat of it briefly in reference to its application to constructive design, reserving for the second part of my lecture that third class of work which I spoke of where the rendering of nature is the principal object of the artist.

I have spoken much about excellence of workmanship being a necessary condition for a manufactured object to be a good work of art. Indeed this is essential to all artistic work, and is quite as important in all branches of ornamental design as in construction. But there is another form of Truth which is quite as needful, and that is, that for decoration applied to construction to be beautiful it must first of all be appropriate. Inappropriate decoration will spoil the best designed and best executed construction. I dwelt at length on this point

in my lecture at Birmingham, giving several illustrations of what I considered bad decoration, but I will not do so here as my lecture as delivered there was too long, and would be longer still now with the additions that I have since made in re-writing it. I will, however, put into shorter form what I said there, merely saying that the general principles I lay down will apply just as well to one form of art-manufacture as another. I have been asked to make some remarks specially applicable to the staple manufacture of this city and its neighbourhood, but the fact is I have absolutely no special knowledge concerning Calico-printing and hardly know the condition that the industry is in at present. I do not remember that this particular branch was represented to any extent at the Annual Competition for the National Medals at South Kensington. I remember the designs for printing muslins for dresses, and that they showed particularly well, but I cannot remember whether they came from this immediate neighbourhood or not. However, as I have said, whatever general remarks I make concerning appropriate decoration will apply equally well to Calico-printing as to other branches of art-manufacture. Certain remarks that I will make here in regard to colour will be applicable. There is this obvious difficulty in speaking both of patterns pure and simple, and of colour, that there is absolutely no

criterion by which we can judge of the beauty of a pattern or of beauty of colour. Both these things depend so entirely upon the capacity that the eye has for judging of proportion or of harmony that there is nothing to be said on the matter. If I say that mauve, magenta, and all the new aniline dyes are offensive colours with a harsh metallic tint which renders them utterly unfit to be used, and impossible to harmonise in any kind of ornamental work, whether in the dyeing of silks, the printing of chintzes, muslins, or wall-paper, I only state my own conviction, with which those will not agree whose eyes are not offended with these colours. The same thing happens with regard to patterns; if I say that a pattern is ugly, vulgar, and badly designed I can bring forward no argument in favour of my assertion, for the thing admits of no proof. But if an imitation of nature is introduced, I have some foundation for an argument on the matter. I can say, for instance, that the animals introduced into the ornament on the beautiful bronze bowls of Assyrian workmanship in the British Museum are perfect for decorative work of the kind, for though done in the simplest possible manner, merely engraved in outline without attempt at detail or relief, they so thoroughly breathe the spirit of the creatures represented and seize upon all the salient and most important points of character that the most finished

sculpture or painting could not surpass them. Also I can explain by examples what I mean by inappropriate decoration, confining myself at present to certain objectionable forms of decoration for furniture, condensing on this point what I said at Birmingham. The illustration that I first take I choose because the particular article of furniture is so common in our drawing-rooms, and because it happens to point the moral of my lecture in many ways; because, besides showing what is bad, I can also explain what I think might be good and appropriate. I should say that a bunch of roses or a lap-dog, painted in a slovenly way on the black japan of a coal-scuttle is as inappropriate a piece of decoration as ever was devised, and would spoil instead of improving the best contrived coal-scuttle.[1] Yet it is undoubtedly one of the most successful ideas in the whole range of our art-manufactures, for there is hardly a drawing-room in the kingdom where there is not some such elegant work of art to be seen. It is not difficult to trace the source of this particular form of bad decoration; it arises entirely from a somewhat vulgar feeling, hidden in the depths of our hearts, that there is something rather common-looking in a coal-scuttle which makes it suitable enough for a

[1] The reader will see by the date of this lecture that this passage was written some years before Mr. Mark Pattison's use of this illustration.

kitchen, but out of place in a drawing-room; hence the introduction of the roses and the lap-dog (varied occasionally by a picture of a church by moonlight) was considered to give great elegance to what would otherwise be rather an objectionable piece of furniture. Now as a good fire is one of the glories of our rooms, I cannot see that a coal-box is much out of place in them even if we are obliged to have a black and unsightly object; nor do I see that when left in its simple undecorated condition it is necessarily so unsightly; it is a piece of furniture like another, and has its own inconspicuous place in the chimney-corner; and if it is not an object we should single out for our admiration, it at all events does not obtrude itself on our gaze. But when it comes to be decorated with bad painting and tawdry gilding it forces itself upon our notice as though it were some kind of elegant vase for holding *pot-pourri.* Fortunately, however, for those who like and can afford handsome furniture there is a most simple way of making a coal-scuttle a really decorative object in a most appropriate manner, and that is by making it of copper or brass and keeping it polished; moreover an admirably appropriate form of decoration might be applied (the idea is not my own, for I have seen it done once in imitation of an old brass pail), by embossing the metal of which they are made with a kind of *repoussé* work;

this might be very effective, but it requires a real artist to do it well, and those are not easily to be found who will devote their energies to the beautifying of so humble an object. This instance of a painted coal-scuttle may for all I know be trite enough with writers on the revival of good art; but I have chosen it for the reasons I gave above, that is, on account of its being an extreme case of inappropriate decoration, and also because it is a very obvious one on account of the utter want of any connecting idea between roses and coals. I will therefore continue to use it as an illustration to my arguments, as one instance will serve to illustrate the matter as well as a dozen. The incongruity which I have dwelt upon, this disconnection of ideas between coals and roses or churches by moonlight, is not the only cause of inappropriateness of that form of decoration as applied to objects of such ordinary use in our houses. We will suppose some suitable subject to be chosen for its embellishment; let us say a landscape, representing the mouth of a coal-pit. If this landscape were well painted by a good artist every one, I think, would agree that it was quite out of place on anything so subject to rough usage as our coal-box; *à fortiori*, if it is badly done it is still more out of place, for bad work has no business to be done at all; so that even if the roses and lap-dog were appropriate in one sense they would not be in another;

they have no place on a coal-scuttle if well done, still less if they are ill done. I can indeed imagine a kind of painting which would be suitable where the things represented would be so simply and conventionally treated as to require only a skilful and intelligent workman to do the painting, a man not necessarily fitted for a higher kind of decorative art, such painting as we see in Oriental lacquer-work; indeed this simple form of decorative painting is the origin of all our modern japan-work (witness the name); but the treatment of it has by this time become entirely debased; the incessant craving for novelty has led our workmen far away from the original idea, so that they imagine a bad imitation of a water-colour drawing or a chromo-lithograph to be better than the broad and simple effects to be got with sober colour and subdued gilding: nothing but the name of this kind of work remains, and we must go back to the fountain-head if we wish to recover the spirit of the original. I must omit much that I should wish to say concerning the very bad condition of the decorative arts in the matter of plate and jewellery; merely saying that there is a reason for its very bad state in the fact that it is a kind of work which is of no value unless the very highest sort of artistic design and the best and most refined workmanship is expended upon it, and that we have not the workmen to do this. The love of display

is at the root of this more than of any kind of bad art. A man's show of plate now is reckoned of value according to its quantity and weight; ignorance of and indifference to the quality of the workmanship as compared to the massiveness of the vessel, and what is called the *richness* of the ornamentation, is the cause of a more complete decay of art in these things than in any other. But I must quote a passage from Dickens bearing on this point, in which with that clearsighted intuition which enables him always to seize on the precise points he requires to illustrate his subject, he has with wonderful conciseness described the condition to which vulgar ostentation has brought us in these matters. He is describing a rich man's dinner party—"Hideous solidity," he says, "was the characteristic of the plate. Everything was made to look as heavy as it could, and to take up as much room as possible. Everything said boastfully.—Here you have as much of me in my ugliness as if I were only lead; but I am so many ounces of precious metal worth so much an ounce; wouldn't you like to melt me down? A corpulent straddling épergne, blotched all over as if it had broken out in an eruption rather than been ornamented, delivered this address from an unsightly silver platform in the centre of the table. Four silver wine-coolers, each furnished with four staring heads, each obtrusively carrying a big

silver ring in each of its ears, conveyed the sentiment up and down the table and handed it on to the pot-bellied salt-cellars. All the big silver spoons and forks widened the mouths of the company expressly for the purpose of thrusting the sentiment down their throats with every morsel they ate." I can add nothing that will better express my meaning with regard to bad art of this sort than this graphic description. I therefore take leave of this part of my subject; but before entering on the matter of Decorative Painting I wish to say a few words on the question of Styles of Art, which is applicable both to what I have said and to what I am going to say in the second part of my lecture, and about which decorative artists and art-workmen trouble themselves a good deal; much more, I think, than is necessary.

If I have dwelt at some length on what I consider false and bad in decorative work it is because by showing you what is wrong I can best explain what I think to be right. For when I wish to lay down any law as to what is beautiful in ornamental design, I cannot say much more than that what is appropriate and well executed is good art.

Subject to the negative conditions treated of above, there is nothing that may not be done in decorative work. If I am asked what is a good pattern for a chintz

hanging or for a wall-paper, I can only say that any well-designed and well-executed appropriate pattern is good. And it is this difficulty, I think, of deciding upon what *ought to be* after the conditions are well understood of what *ought not to be* that has led so many into the belief that there is no salvation in art out of particular styles; some standing up for English Gothic, others for French Gothic, others for Greek, others for Moorish, and others believing that there is no safety out of a particular century. The violent reaction which took place against what was an obviously bad condition of decorative art about fifty or sixty years ago, headed, as far as my knowledge goes, by Pugin, and which is known by the name of the Gothic Revival, induced men anxious for a better state of things into an extreme of purism, which became a sort of watchword by which the good and earnest workers in the cause of art were to be known.

Now no one who has seen the painted windows in St. George's Chapel, designed by Benjamin West, where all the conditions of stained glass are misunderstood or ignored, where an attempt was made to produce the effect of the highly elaborated light and shade of the oil-pictures in fashion at the time, and where no thought was given to adapting the work to the exigencies of the surrounding architecture,—no one who remembers the pseudo-classical monuments of military and naval heroes rising to

a heaven of blue slate through ponderous masses of marble clouds, which encumber Westminster Abbey and others of our cathedrals, will suppose that this reaction came a moment too soon. But it is not because these things are done in what is called a Classic style, instead of what is called a Gothic style, that they are bad; it is because they are in the first place genuinely bad work of their kind, which would look bad wherever it was placed, and secondly but less so, because classical work is out of place and could with difficulty be made to look harmonious in a Gothic cathedral. I say less so because the Elizabethan monuments and the almost purely classic work of James the First's time certainly do not look out of place in the Gothic architecture of our cathedrals, and there are numberless instances all through Europe of the happy adaptation of one style to another.

It must be remembered too that if the decorators and painters of the thirteenth century did not introduce light and shades into their work it was because their art was in its infancy, and that the whole of the best art of Europe from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries shows one continuous struggle to get nearer to the realization of the splendid effects of roundness and solidity of Nature; the beauty and grandeur of the work of those early masters depending on something quite different from the fact that their pictures

are painted with flat colours and without perspective. If I dwell on this point it is because the belief in the efficacy of flat tints and black outlines is still strong among us, especially among architects, who in this respect assumed a practice of laying down the law for the guidance of artists.

Anyhow this determined insistance upon the necessity of a purely flat kind of decoration has produced as a result, a kind of work quite as unfortunate, if not more so, than the vulgar rococo ornament which it has superseded. In the use of diapers for hangings, our school of design teachers and workmen imagine they have found a safe harbour of refuge from the difficulties which beset them in their voyages in search of appropriate patterns. They appear to be quite unaware that it is just as difficult to make a good diaper as any other form of decorative pattern, and they have opportunities for violent juxtaposition of colour which they never had before the numberless new dyes now in fashion were invented, or when the custom of making shaded designs of flowers and scrolls obliged them, to a certain extent, to break up their tints. These most excruciating contrasts of colour, that are only too commonly found in houses, more especially in paper-hangings, where we see the most violent blues opposed to raw red and orange and magenta patterns on arsenic-green grounds, are accepted by people in general as being

in what they call the Gothic taste. Tiles in this Gothic taste, too, are very common, in which magenta and green are the prominent colours. Indeed, people have come to this point, that they will not have harmonious colour when it is to be got. It was always possible to fall back on Turkey carpets if one could not find other things to one's taste, with the certainty of finding them good and rich in colour; but they were evidently too harmonious for the taste of the majority, so that wools dyed in England of harsh bright blue, magenta, and purple colours, were sent out with the idea of improving the taste of the Oriental makers, and it is now almost impossible to find any Turkey carpets that are not as crude and disagreeable as English ones.[1] The Orientals certainly manage these harsh colours as well as it is possible: but colours that are bad to begin with cannot be made to look anything but disagreeable. The fact is that mauve, magenta, and all the new aniline dyes, are offensive colours, with a harsh metallic tint which renders them utterly unfit to be used, and impossible to harmonize in any kind of ornamental work, whether in the dyeing of silks, or the printing of muslins, chintzes, and wall-papers. But let me return to the question I

[1] Lately vast quantities of carpets and rugs from Turkestan and the neighbouring countries have been imported into Europe far exceeding in beauty the old Turkey carpets alluded to in the text. The East is now being exhausted of all its traditional manufactures, never, I fear, to be restored.

was considering. There is really nothing objectionable or inappropriate in the imitation of Nature in surface decoration, *provided it is kept in subservience to the more important necessities of decorative design.* When the qualities of design, and the beauties of form, and colour, and workmanship are of the highest order, as in the works of the great Italian masters of the sixteenth century, the imitation of relief even to the point of deception is admissible, because it becomes subordinate to the other qualities which are more difficult of attainment. The reason that the flying cherubs and festoons of flowers which we so constantly introduced in the debased art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which are frequently so skilfully done as to be absolutely deceptive, and appear detached from the walls; the reason why this is bad art is because the trick of imitating relief from the surface is a very easy one, and is the only power the artist has: the decoration being badly designed, the figures and flowers being ill-drawn, and bad in colour, the whole decoration interferes with the general unity of design in the architecture; and for this reason it is bad art.

Again, the reason why the attempt to introduce the light, and shade, and relief of an oil-painting in stained glass is bad art, is—not because stained glass was made of flat tints in the thirteenth century—but because, in the first place, a window, which is meant to admit light, carries

with it the idea of transparency, and therefore should not be encumbered with heavy shading; and secondly, because, however well the light and shade may be imitated, the presence of the lead-lines brings us back constantly to the idea of a flat surface, so that the kind of painting which best accords with this is the best for the purpose. The reason why the imitation of relief is not admissible in the more ordinary kinds of wall-decoration, is, first, that the means of execution are of a very imperfect kind;—the common block-printing, used for wall-papers, cannot produce that subtlety of workmanship which is necessary for the design to be carried out as a work of high art, whereas it can be so managed as to produce a coarse kind of illusion, thus elevating the lower quality above the higher; and, secondly, because supposing we could so imitate a natural form, a climbing rose let us say, in a wall-paper, as for a moment to deceive us into thinking it was real; the continual repetition of the same form which is a necessary part of any printed or stencilled decoration would undeceive us in a moment. But between the limits of a diaper on the one hand, and deceptive light and shade on the other, there are a hundred different ways, or degrees rather, of suggesting the roundness of objects in this form of ornamental design, which are perfectly reasonable and allowable; and here again I may refer you to Oriental designs, as showing admirably how far

the imitation of natural forms, flowers, fruit, birds, &c., may be carried without attempt at illusion.

And the consideration of this subject brings me naturally to the second part of my lecture, wherein I shall devote myself entirely to that kind of ornamental design I mentioned at the beginning, "in which the imitation or realization of Nature is the principal and most important aim of the artist."

This, of course, naturally comprehends the whole art of painting, whether purely decorative, as in the great works of the great Italian masters, or in the form in which it is more common in the present day, that of cabinet-pictures; but do not be afraid that I am going to inflict upon you a disquisition on the whole history and practice of painting; I shall merely treat of it, as I have treated of constructive and ornamental design, as but a part in fact of the great world of art, and with reference to the necessity of truth as the great essential of beauty.

In this part of my subject, although it will be impossible for me to discuss the matter properly without referring to much that is false and bad in the state of the art at the present time, it will be my pleasure to show you, to the best of my ability to what glorious heights of excellence genius may arrive when it devotes itself entirely and without afterthought of anything but achieving perfection to the one single idea of the study of the Truth of Nature

in her noblest and most beautiful forms. But as I am about to make an attempt to show that an essential Element of Beauty in this Art of painting is Realism, or the power of realising what is beautiful in Nature, it would appear necessary at first to make some definition of what this Beauty of Nature really is; but we are met at the outset by the apparently insurmountable difficulty that, tastes differing, as they do, so widely on matters of beauty, it would seem futile to endeavour to set up a positive standard of beauty to which all men might agree. Indeed, to lay down a distinct law on this point, to make as it were a science of æsthetics, as there is a science of mathematics, so that we might have a distinct logical basis for a decision concerning the beauty of a work of Nature, or for settling the comparative beauty of two objects, so that we might say, for instance, "This flower or this face is more beautiful than that," not "I like this flower or this face better than that," with all the ramifications of argument that could be brought to bear on the question, would be a fitter exercise for the reasoning powers of a philosopher than of an artist, whose business it is not so much to argue on what is beautiful, as to take it for granted that what he considers beautiful is fit for his purpose.

I will state however, as briefly as I can, what I think can be said as bearing upon this point. In the first

place, I am myself so distinctly conscious of the beauty of certain things, that I feel there must be a reasonable ground for my admiration. Here of course is no argument, for another person may say the same thing, in reference to certain things which I not only do not admire, but positively dislike. Nevertheless there are certain extremes of beauty and ugliness which all nations, raised above a state of barbarism, have agreed to accept in all ages. The beauty of a lily or a rose has never, that I know of, been contested; and the ugliness of a toad is proverbial; so it appears evident that there is some kind of standard to be found. In the second place, I am inclined to deny that the differences of taste and opinion, which I have referred to as creating the difficulty I am dealing with, indicate any allowable ground for those differences, for this reason—that people are so apt to mistake what they admire for what they enjoy; and that it is this confusion in our minds as to what is really enjoyable in outward objects that causes the difficulty of setting up a standard of their beauty. There are, of course, many people who have no enjoyment in the works of Nature or art, and with such there is no concern here. But there is another class of persons who have a genuine enjoyment in beautiful things; but who, from the extremely artificial state in which we live in our present condition of civilisation, cannot really tell to what

extent the beauties of Nature give them pleasure. They frequently fancy that they admire or enjoy things, which, if they could or would examine their minds, they would possibly find are very wearisome to them. They admire what they think it right to admire, and what they admire they think they must enjoy. And this, it may be remarked, may be the reason why the art of semi-civilized nations is generally of uniform beauty within a certain range. Having no education in art, they form no artificial tastes. Their enjoyment is in simple things, and they are not ashamed of it, so they do not aspire to express in art more than they are capable of enjoying; whereas in our high-pressure state of civilisation, there is a large number of people, who, though they may have small knowledge of what is beautiful and limited powers of enjoyment, are not content unless they appear to take pleasure in things which are really beyond their powers of appreciation. Such as these draw unconsciously to themselves a distinct line between what they select for admiration, and what they really enjoy in their hearts; and it is among them that those differences, those oppositions of taste and opinion arise that make the difficulty I have been discussing; and it is for, and by, these pretenders, as I may call them, that so much second-rate art is produced as we see around us. But I will dwell no longer on this matter; it would take too

long to discuss the point in all its bearings: nor indeed am I prepared to do so, for the whole question is surrounded with very great difficulties, and I leave it to pass to the point more immediately requiring consideration.

It will hardly I think be denied that Truth to Nature is the most important necessity in any kind of work which professes to imitate Nature, but there is more to be said on this point than would at first sight appear. The art of painting is, after all, but a part of the art of Ornamental Design, and the power of imitation is rarely unaccompanied by some power of design.

It is pretty obvious that when a savage makes a rough drawing in imitation of an animal, some feeling of design must enter into his imitation, for he has to decide upon the action he will represent, and the position it has to occupy on the vessel or wall on which he draws it; this he will do in the way which makes it most pleasant to his eyes—and the art of design is this and nothing more. Michelangelo himself in painting a figure does no more than make the best imitation of nature he can, and arrange the figure in the form and position which best pleases him. But one or other of the powers called into play is pretty sure to predominate, and this creates two classes of art, which, to my thinking, are more closely allied than is generally supposed; at least by far too much distinction is made between them, as if they were *opposing*

qualities, rather than so closely connected that it is difficult to draw the dividing line between them. I mean the Real and the Ideal—Realism and Idealism. These are generally set in opposition to each other; we hear of schools of Realists and schools of Idealists; and certainly the Ideal is apt to be sneered at by so-called Realists as being something which is untrue to Nature and therefore beyond the scope of art; Realism, again, is looked down upon by Idealists as being unworthy the aim of men of high artistic gifts; but this denotes a confusion of ideas concerning the necessities of a work of art which leads on the one side to those poor substitutes for photography in the shape of elaborate studies from nature which some of our modern artists give us under the name of Realism—poor substitutes I call them, because the subtlety with which photography represents the more unimportant truths of nature can never be rivalled by human handiwork; or to a still lower class of picture in which the notion of Realism is achieved by the identity of some historical accessory, as though one should paint the flight of Napoleon from Waterloo, and make the interest of the picture depend on the fact that the coach is painted from the real original at Madame Tussaud's, an idea which fully comes up to our modern notions of Realism. On the other side, under the name of Idealism, of High Art, of the Grand Style, and I know not what, we have a more

insufferable amount of bombastic work forced upon us than it is conceivable men could do under the pretence of representing nature. But real shades of difference there are between Realism and Idealism, caused by the operation of one or the other tendency I have spoken of in the artist's mind. To this point I shall recur further on.

Still, so far from Realism being, as some suppose, in opposition to the development of Beauty in Art, I affirm that the highest Beauty is attained by the highest application of the realistic or imitative faculty. Truth I have affirmed to be the essential of Beauty; how is truth in art to be arrived at but by the power of realising the beauties of Nature to the utmost?

Here I must pause, for I find myself in face of the difficult question, How are we to decide on what *is* true to Nature? Opinions vary on this point almost as much as tastes differ with regard to what is beautiful. Among those who practise art you will find some who differ at every point on the relative truth of artistic productions. The fact is, that those who are really capable of judging of the truth of a work of art will be found to be infinitely fewer in number than is supposed; yet, I imagine, there are very few who will not say, that though they know nothing about beauty or art, they are at least capable of judging whether a picture be true to nature or not; indeed there is no point on which people are commonly so touchy,

or which they are so tenacious in holding, as this of being able to decide whether a picture is "like" or not; and this is the reason—they mistake part of the truth for the whole, or an unimportant truth for an important one. The ignorant sight-seer, who stops his listless wandering in the British Museum to look over the shoulder of a student drawing from one of the antique statues, stands amazed at what appears to him to be the truthfulness of what is possibly but a very feeble copy of the original; for him it is enough that the arms and legs are represented in due number, and in approximately correct positions; that the eyes are correct in being open, and the mouth in being shut, that the light falls on the proper side; he makes no question but that he has the power of seeing that the drawing is true to the original. Really it may be so unlike that the veriest tyro in art, or the most superficially-gifted amateur, can see the faults at a glance. This is an extreme case of a glaring kind, and therefore perhaps the better adapted for illustration, as it is on that account obvious to every one. But the same kind of ignorance, though of different degrees according to the knowledge of the observer, is constantly shown in the appreciation of pictures from Nature. Her truths are so many, so subtle, and so various, that it requires that born insight of an artist which is his greatest gift to discover but a part of them; and even having the gift, his whole

life is spent in acquiring that knowledge, for not only does he day by day discover some new beauty to which he was blind before, but he finds in doing so how little he really knows.

This insight into the truths of nature, coming partly as a gift and partly acquired by the closest and most continual observation, combined with the power of expressing his knowledge is what I understand the power of Realism to be; and these truths are what the uncultivated cannot see—they are to be found only by those who diligently seek after them. The broad external facts of Nature are patent to everybody. An ignorant person discovers in a landscape picture that moonlight is represented, for he sees the moon in the sky, the reflection in the water, the light catching the roofs of the houses and the tops of the trees, and candle-light shining through the windows. The picture may be the veriest daub, without a single point given correctly, but this fact of the moonshine is made clear, and the unpractised observer gazes with fond admiration on what he considers a miracle of truthful painting. What does he know of the relative values of tone and colour, truth of perspective, aerial and linear, and other matters which require a lifetime of observation to represent faithfully. It seems simple pedantry to him if you tell him the picture is bad because thoroughly untrue. Can he not see with his own eyes? Does he not know what moon-

light is like? &c. &c. And so a mass of work, better no doubt than the very bad I have just quoted as an example, is accepted by the public as being admirably true, which though rendering cleverly enough unimportant things, is thoroughly false on all points where a real artistic insight is necessary. And the converse of this is equally true, that the noblest works of high art are completely misunderstood and ignored by the general mass of people, and not unfrequently by artists, because they contain truths which are beyond their comprehension, or which have not been sufficiently studied to take the important place in their minds which they ought to hold. The artist who has the profoundest insight into the noblest truths, and neglects no point in his work which is calculated to give them the highest expression, unquestionably produces the noblest work; and yet, in spite of this apparently obvious fact, Mr. Leslie, in his Handbook for young painters, has what I cannot but call the daring to assert that there is no such thing as what is commonly called "High Art," and declares emphatically that a picture by Ostade, who aimed at nothing but the literal representation of coarse and ignoble subjects, never caring to look for any form of beauty in Nature,[1] is as high a work of art as a

[1] This rather sweeping statement requires some modification; I meant it to apply to Ostade's treatment of figures; in beauty of tone and light and shade he is only second to Rembrandt, and his execution is subtle and delicate in the highest degree.

picture by Raphael, (he says, as far as I remember, "I should consider a picture by Ostade on a level with one by Raphael"), the whole of whose life was devoted to searching through Nature for the most beautiful forms and the loftiest characteristics, and who, by the acclamation of the world, has been recognised as not only having found the highest beauty, but as having expressed it in his best work in a more consummately refined and graceful manner than any painter. This is the lesson Mr. Leslie has given to young painters, and admirably, I may say, has it been learnt. Still every truth of Nature thoroughly understood and expressed has a charm in its own degree. The stump of a tree and a broken-down railing is quite enough to make a good picture if it is painted with due understanding of the subtle relations of tone and colour which pervade all Nature. But to convey the fact that there is in a particular spot a certain stump of a tree of which you give a portrait by the side of a certain broken railing of which you give a portrait, is not painting a work of art at all.

Most of our popular art depends for its success almost entirely on the facts represented in the pictures and not on the art which is expended in the painting of them; a certain amount of technical skill is required no doubt by the more knowing of the public, but very little of it will go a long way. The public generally not being very

profoundly instructed on the point of art, but perfectly understanding the point of a scene from Shakspere or one of Scott's novels, the artist whose only desire is to make a popular success, does his best to amuse the public with what they can appreciate, and represents his subject without regard to the more important and nobler truths of Nature, which he knows would be thrown away upon the ignorant, only looking for just enough of reality as is sufficient to make his point obvious to them.

Hence the complete absence of what is called style in the popular school of painting in England, and of the contempt with which foreign schools, better educated in the practice of their art and more serious in aim, look down on such work. Those critics who speak of style as an academic quality to be acquired as if it were something separate from truth, fail to see that beauty is only to be attained in art by the study of what is profoundly and not superficially true. Style I understand to be that power of realising the beauty of Nature which is only to be attained by study, and the power of expressing this knowledge as one who has had a complete education in his craft. An academic style, taken in the bad sense in which critics use it, is nothing but a mannerism, and is the result of the student adopting, without understanding them, the peculiarities of work of a certain painter or school, rather than studying the truths of Nature with a view to arrive ultimately at her

highest beauties. This form of mannerism is extremely common in foreign schools, where acres of canvas and paper are covered with masses of theatrical and bombastic figures, who neither look nor behave as any mortals could look or behave under any circumstances. Every one who knows anything of German art, for instance, knows well the scowl and the clenched fist which does duty for the tragic passions of their heroes; most of the efforts at high art which have been made in this country till within the last few years have included this scowl as the kind of stamp which marks a work of style, or what is called historical art, as distinguished from a "genre" picture. But there is not much fear at present of a stilted or grandiose style spreading amongst us; the popular work of which I have been speaking is far too much of a favourite among us. English artists as a rule are too independent to adopt a manner; unfortunately they are frequently too independent to submit to any kind of schooling. The multiplicity of picture exhibitions that we have encourages young artists to exhibit pictures before they have learnt anything of their craft; and, once having gained a place at an exhibition, perhaps even made a success by a display of talent never to be developed, those are very few who have the perseverance to school themselves further. The mannerism of English artists is more often that of complete ignorance, and ignorance has a manner of its own made to

conceal ignorance. This mannerism is known by the name of cleverness. That dexterous manipulation, those brilliant performances with transparent shadows and sparkling lights, with which the walls of our exhibition-rooms are yearly covered, are only displays of ignorance. They serve to conceal from a public amazed at the dexterity of the performance, the fact that the painter knows nothing of his art. If the pictures are not on this wise, they are what is called realistic, the realism consisting in the most elaborate painting of trivial details while the great and important truths of Nature are unknown and uncared for; so that the value of the work is reckoned according to the patience of the artists in realising trifles, and the success of the picture is in proportion to the time the artist has taken in painting it.

This is not all the art to be found in England. We have among us men of poetic minds and sincere and serious aims who will never condescend to paint for popularity; and that very spirit of independence which is so fatal to conceited facility, is perhaps a means of securing a certain amount of originality which otherwise might have been confined, at all events for a time, by the trammels of academic teaching. Not that I mean to say that education can ever fetter genius; on the contrary, a deficiency of early training of a good kind interposes a forest of difficulties to prevent the artist of genius from

giving form to his thoughts which he never completely clears to the end of his life. I am referring rather to the enforced adoption of certain bad and stilted methods of work which is to be found in some foreign schools, and which may well shackle a man of talent, if not a man of great genius. It is to these schools that we owe those ludicrous exhibitions of the human form which are fondly supposed to be done in obedience to the style of the great Italian masters, where the beautiful and varied play of the muscles under the skin is represented by something to be found in a sack of potatoes rather than in a human body. No one has ever been worse treated in this respect than the gigantic genius to whom I have already referred, and to the study of whose works I shall devote the rest of my paper, as that will best explain what I mean when I speak of Realism as giving the highest form of beauty. I mean the great Michelangelo Buonarotti, justly styled by his countrymen "The divine"—a man whom as an artist I place on a level with, and in some respects above, the greatest known of Greek artists.

I have referred a while back to the predominance of one or other of the faculties which go to the making of high artistic work; I mean the powers of design and of imitation: now in Greek art the love of design seems to predominate over that of imitation; in Michelangelo's the two seem to hold an equal place. I do not mean

that the Greeks had less of the imitative faculty, but that they kept it in subordination to that of design. Nor do I say that Michelangelo in any way excelled the Greeks in anything that he did in the way of study from Nature, for the work of Phidias is brought to a perfection of truth and beauty which Michelangelo may have striven after but which he certainly never achieved, at all events in his sculpture; though I shall show you a copy of one of his painted figures shortly, which to my mind equals in perfection of beauty anything done by Phidias, and that out of the force of his own single genius, for the work of Phidias was completely unknown to him. But this I say, that Michelangelo's best work is in no way inferior to the very highest Greek work in point of design, and that his imitative faculty not being kept in subordination, he was enabled to see truths that no Greek ever dreamed of expressing. Above all, his vast imaginative gift, the stormy poetry of his mind, the passionate Italian nature that was in him, the soul of Dante living again in another form, and finding its expression in another art, led him to contemplate a treatment of the human form which the intellectual Greek considered beyond the range of his art.

The Greeks aimed at the perfection of decorative design, and insomuch as the study of the human form helped them to arrive at that perfection, they carried it further

and to a more consummate point than has ever been done before or since. But they gave themselves small scope for the display of human passion; when they represented it, it was in a cold and dignified manner which fails to awaken our sympathies. The figures of fighting warriors on the pediment of the temple of Ægina, receive and inflict wounds, and meet their death, with a fixed smile, which shows that the artist intended to avoid the expression of pain or passion. The Greek artists have the supreme right to the title of Idealists; they are the true worshippers of the ideal; the ideal of beauty once achieved, they cared not to vary it. Witness the most perfect specimen of their decorative art which remains, the most perfect in the whole world; I mean the frieze of the Parthenon. There is not in the hundreds of figures which form the Panathenaic procession, except by accidents of execution, any variation of character in the beautiful ideal forms represented, whether they be of man, woman, or animal; enough remains of the faces to show that they conform to two or three types throughout without variety of character or expression—all is as perfect as the most profound knowledge, the most skilful workmanship, and the highest sense of beauty can make it. But with the great Florentine the realistic tendency is obvious from the beginning, not to work up to an ideal of humanity, but to study it in its countless forms of beauty and

grandeur, and its ever-varying moods, and to represent these as truthfully as the deepest contemplation of Nature could enable him to do. I have not time to discuss further the subject of Greek art, but what I have said will show my meaning plainly enough, and I hope make it clear that I have no want of appreciation of those sublimely beautiful works which will be the school of art for the whole world as long as the world lasts. In Michelangelo we have an instance of a mind gifted with the highest imaginative faculties, and with the most profound love and veneration for all that is most noble, most beautiful, and grandest in Nature, following with the most unwearying perseverance the road most calculated to develop these faculties, by studying with accurate minuteness the construction of the human form, so as to be able to give the highest reality to his conceptions. Luca Signorelli's imaginative faculty was akin to that of Michelangelo, and some go so far as to think that this painter's work had an influence on Michelangelo. This may possibly be true, and no doubt Michelangelo may have admired this painter's work greatly. But I do not see the necessity for supposing that Michelangelo was indebted to him for ideas, when we consider the vastness of his genius. The difference I wish to point out between two men, alike in the character of their genius is, that Michelangelo's marvellous knowledge of the human form, in which he

stands alone, enabled him to give a splendid and truthful beauty to his figures, and to dwell on subtleties of modelling and of outline, which are not to be found in Luca Signorelli's work. Astonishing as is the power of Luca Signorelli's imagination, and admirably true as are the action and expression of his figures, he fell short precisely on that point of realism which makes the enormous gulf between him and the greater artist. Michelangelo I consider the greatest realist the world has ever seen; the action, expression, and drawing of his figures down to the minutest folds of drapery and points of costume, down to the careful finish given to the most trivial accessories (when used) such as the books his figures hold, and the desks they write on, are all studied from the point of view of being as true to Nature as they can be made. It was not he but his imitators and followers who made human bodies like sacks of potatoes; he who never made, never could make, a fault of anatomy in his life, has had such followers; and who would seem, moreover, to have gloried in thinking how Michelangelesque was their work. It is his followers again and not he, who make their saints and prophets write with pens without ink, on scrolls of paper without desks.

And here there is a very general misconception, which I must dwell on for a short time, it is so very important that it should be set right. I have heard it said again and again, by artists (who ought to know better) and

others, that Michelangelo's works may be grand in style, they may be imaginative, they may even be beautiful (sometimes), but they cannot be said to be true to Nature on account of their exaggeration. You will all recognize that this is the common way in which Michelangelo's works are spoken of. Now my first notion connected with a lecture on Art was that of vindicating Michelangelo's honour on this point. There are, I think, many reasons, and perhaps some good ones, for this opinion. The best and most universally known of his works is the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel, a work executed when he was sixty years old, by which time his magnificent manner had possibly developed into somewhat of a mannerism[1]—that is to say, that whereas throughout his life the necessities of his subjects, chosen no doubt especially for the purpose, obliged him to depict the human form in every beautiful variety of action and position, in his later years this pleasure of exercising his ingenuity in inventing and correctly representing difficulties of foreshortening seemed to grow upon him, and in some parts of the Last Judgment—especially in the upper part—outweighed the more simple dignity with which most of it is invested. The stupendous work which to my mind

[1] A lecture written later will show that further study of this celebrated fresco has considerably modified my views of it; though there is some truth in what is here written.

has done most to make his name immortal is on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, executed twenty years before the Last Judgment, which is on the end wall of the same chapel; and it is on this work that I take my stand in placing Michelangelo as the chief of realistic painters; not so much on the Last Judgment, tremendous as it is both in conception and execution. Another, and the most important reason for the charge of exaggeration is, that for some reason or another no great man has ever suffered so much at the hands of the engravers. All with one accord have taken it into their heads that Michelangelo's work cannot be properly copied unless limbs and muscles are exaggerated in a way which they would never dream of using with another man's work; in fact, they think it necessary to import into their work every exaggerated defect which they find in the works of his imitators, or rather the defects of exaggeration to be found in the school formed on Raphael after his death. Raphael, indeed, himself is not exempt from having made exaggerated imitations of the great master. The Incendio del Borgo is perhaps the beginning of that lumpy and inflated style, so different from the simple and elegant work of Michelangelo. Finding apparently that Michelangelo is not so Michelangelesque as they expected, they feel bound to improve upon him; and the greatest master of drawing the world has ever seen has had the most ill-drawn travesties of

his finest works passed off on those who are unable to visit the originals and judge for themselves. Still those who have eyes to see, can very plainly make out from the wretched stuff that engravers have given us what manner of man it was whose work is thus caricatured. It is obvious that the mind which could conceive figures so amazingly grand in intention could not be guilty of altering Nature for the purpose of producing the grotesque forms and faces shown us by the engravers. I fortunately a little time ago had the opportunity of verifying for myself what I had surmised to be true, but much as I expected in the way of beauty before entering the Sistine, I was prepared rather to be overwhelmed by a magnificent grandeur of imagination and design than to be charmed by refined beauties of form and face; and another element of beauty I found which I had not expected, for the engravings carefully avoid representing it in their copies, and on a point of excellence for which the palm has generally been given to another painter. I mean the amazing subtlety, variety and truth of expression in the faces of the Titanic beings who sit enthroned over one's head in that amazing work. Raphael has been considered the master of expression and beauty of face, Michelangelo of grandeur of form; I find the latter supreme in all. He it was who found in Nature what beauty and what grandeur lies in the most trivial actions, and first had

the power to depict them. Raphael's receptive mind seized at once on the idea, adapted it to his style, and followed close on the great master's steps. The possibility of verifying the truth of what I say is now, fortunately, within reach of all amateurs of art; for within the last eighteen months this amazing work of which I am speaking,—in which the variety is so great that Vasari may well say, "That no man who is a painter now cares to seek new inventions, attitudes, draperies, originality, and force of expression,"—this great work has been reproduced in all its details in photography; the enterprising German who has rendered this most important service, having taken no less than 140 negatives, all (with the exception of seven or eight from the Last Judgment) being taken from the ceiling. These photographs are a revelation in art; no one until now who has not seen the original fresco has had the slightest idea of what Michelangelo's work is. I have made copies of two of these photographs to a large scale for the purpose of giving you some idea of the beauty of his stupendous style; and, as I say, the photographs are within the reach of all who care to possess them, so every one who pleases may have the opportunity of verifying the truth of my words.

I allude to two of the naked figures which sit in pairs on the architectural projections which form the sides of the prophets' thrones. Each pair of these figures holds between

them a large medallion, on which, in imitation of a relief in bronze and gold is painted a subject from the Book of Kings, or supports a ponderous festoon of leaves and acorns, which is a common feature of decoration in classical architecture, but employed in a totally new way by Michelangelo, which the original inventor of the idea was far from dreaming of. For there are no less than twenty of these figures, and Michelangelo has taken advantage of their employment to represent not only almost every kind of action of which the position of these figures could suggest to his great genius, but for the display of every variety and mood of the human mind. One of these seems the very type of life and activity; he laughs as he shifts the ribbon by which he supports his medallion from one shoulder to the other; he is in the act of uncrossing his legs as he does it, and the great master of design has arrested him in the middle of this complicated, and, to any other artist, almost impossible movement. An instantaneous photograph could not seize on the action with more absolute accuracy, and there is that look of life in his light and active limbs that you almost expect him to continue his movement. More grand is the other as he sits calmly reposing on his ponderous burden, profoundest and most melancholy thought reflected on his God-like face. Others seem to catch some faint sound of the inspiration which the cherubs of God are whispering in the ear of the

prophet or sibyl below, and start with affrighted and awe-stricken looks. There is another laughing figure even more beautiful than this one; he lifts with ease his heavy weight of leaves and acorns, while his fellow looks at him with an angry glance as he struggles to raise his own share which has slipped from his shoulder. There is a pair who converse over their task, and another pair perform it with careless indifference, as if weary and uninterested; and all these various pictures are depicted with a realism of expression and action, a beauty of form and face, an absolute accuracy of anatomical expression, a splendour of light and shade, a roundness of modelling, and minuteness of finish to perfect drawing of every nail on hand or foot, and the graceful turn of every lock of hair, which never flags for a moment, and which is never at fault. The beauty of the heads of these figures is beyond all that ever was done in art; nothing of Raphael's, to my mind, approaches them; and on one point he differs widely from the Greeks; while he gives to many of his faces the beautiful refinement of a woman's, he has never sacrificed one atom of the manliness. The figure before us, with all the melancholy tenderness of its face, has nothing but the character of a man, and the figure is massive as rock, with all the beauty of its forms. Not so the Greeks, who made their Apollos so effeminate that it is difficult to tell from the head whether a man or woman is represented. The beauty of the heads of these

figures is, as I say, beyond all that ever was done, but it is hardly more extraordinary than the beauty of the bodies and limbs. The hands and feet especially are invariably perfect, and being the most difficult part of the figure show in contrast to most of our modern work, for they are precisely the parts that are always the most perfectly done and the most finished. But more wonderful than all is the harmony of design; the figures being in pairs, and facing each other, they are made to a certain extent to correspond. The perfectly natural way in which this is done without forcing the action of the figures into similar forms is not the least astounding part of the work. One pair is in action, another in repose, and yet it never occurs to the spectator till he begins to examine the work as a composition that this is a matter of most careful arrangement. The lines of composition too of each figure are not only most harmonious in themselves, but in perfect harmony with every figure round it. But what shall I say? In what words shall I express myself when I come to speak of the inspired beings—sibyls and prophets—who sit enthroned below? The realization of these sublime forms is carried to the highest pitch. Nothing so true as the expression and action of these figures down to the most trivial points was ever done. The most magnificent of these figures to my thinking is the prophet Isaiah; he receives inspiration from a cherub, who, with excited looks, is pointing behind him, his

flying drapery indicating that he has come, like the winged Mercury of the Pagans, with a direct message from Heaven. With all the grandeur of this figure, the movement and expression are as exactly true as any painter of child-life could desire. Turn to the prophet himself; what a subtle combination o expressions on his face! His right hand drawing forth the book wherein he records the inspirations he receives from Heaven, he listens to the Divine message with a mingled expression of attention and wonder. His downcast eyes have a fixed look, as though they saw not; his brow is half raised in wonder, half frowning in deepest thought, and a slight look of bewilderment plays hesitating round his mouth, as with his left hand he seems to indicate that he has received the message and turns with the intention of recording it. The massive grandeur of his features is in accordance with the dignified repose of the action, and over all there is the lofty look of the prophet not unaccustomed to hold intercourse with his God. I believe this to be the most triumphant realization of a complicated expression and action combined with the most consummate grandeur of face and form that was ever achieved. The first impression of the sight of this figure in its gigantic size on the ceiling sixty feet above one's head is that of amazement at the mighty art that produced it; in this case Nature really seems to have been surpassed, and a new creation made. But the imagination of the artist, how justly called

divine, rises to yet higher flights when he treats of the creation of the world, and the history of our first parents in the centre compartments of the ceiling. But throughout, from beginning to end, through all the hundreds of groups and figures which make up this triumph of the decorative art, there is this one predominant feeling; that no matter how supremely difficult the position or action of the figures, no matter whether he be representing prophet, cherub, or ordinary mortal, or even those scenes where the Almighty manifests His glory in acts of creation, the expression of face and figure is realised with the utmost attention to truth. The draperies take not the least important place in this expression; they clothe and express the forms of the limbs without affectation, and in the most natural manner; as the figure moves so the drapery moves; as the figure rests so the drapery falls. Everything is in perfect balance; the turn of the shoulders follows the movement of the head; the limbs answer to and balance each other exactly as in Nature; and the figures have thus a more absolute vitality than any other artist has ever been able to give. All other artists, except perhaps Raphael, and he only when he had caught the inspiration from Michelangelo is to be excepted, seem to place their figures in attitudes; it is his amazing and almost incredible power of seizing the passing movement that makes Michelangelo's figures appear positively alive; an instant more and the position is

changed. To draw from one of his figures is like drawing from Nature itself; it was only in copying portions of these figures that I appreciated how profound a Realism underlies the Ideal of this greatest of artists.

These are the mighty works that, like the gorgeous symphonies of Beethoven and the choruses of Handel, stand out in sublime solitude above the efforts of other men. It will be well for students, and indeed for all artists, to remember that, if they wish to catch some reflections of the beauties that appear revealed in these lofty creations of genius, they will fail most egregiously if they only aspire to imitate them; whereas it is in the power of each one to follow in the steps of this most glorious master, by seeking in Nature as he did, for some of her hidden truths, by never condescending to substitute dexterity for knowledge, or to catch applause by wilfully falsifying for fear that Truth should be misunderstood. In this way they will find that it is not necessary to treat of angels or prophets to produce a thing of beauty, for realism of this noble kind can glorify the humblest subject.

LECTURE II.[1]

OLD AND NEW ART.

I HAVE no intention in the present discourse of passing in review the whole history of Old and New Art, or of drawing out at length the comparison between them. I intend, on the contrary, so far from attempting to exhaust the subject, to confine myself to the consideration of a few reasons only for the difference between our Modern Art and that of previous ages—a difference to my mind not in favour of the former—and to a brief inquiry as to how far we may hope that our work will ever attain as high a standard as that of the Old Masters, and what direction it should take to arrive at this result.

I have been led to the discussion of this subject, because it is not uncommonly believed and asserted, that the Art of our day may be shown to be in advance of that of the past; or rather, that, if not equal to it in some so-called

[1] This lecture was given at the Royal Institution, May 1872.

technical or academical qualities, it is acquiring so many important "new lights" from the general progress of knowledge, that its development into an Art taking its standpoint on a higher ground than that which we have been accustomed to call High Art, is only a question of time, of the spread of a more general art-education, and, more especially, of certain ideas.

We are all familiar with the argument, which, while it admits that the great artists of history, whether Greek or Italian, may have conceived and realized an ideal of the human form which in these days we cannot pretend to rival, yet insists that ideas on this subject are, to use a modern vulgarism, "played out;" that we want our art to be more in accordance with the spirit of the age, which is an age of realities and progress; that our art must be above all realistic, and show us Nature as we see her around us, and that it must also progress and keep pace with the advancement of science and education, so as to give us something new. As science is perpetually startling us with new discoveries, so art must also break new ground and strike out a fresh path. I do not say that the argument, put into this broad and coarse form, exactly expresses the opinion of any really thoughtful persons; but it is at the root of much that is written and said on the subject, and that by persons in a position to influence public taste, and who at all events imagine they

have well considered the subject; and it is so plausible as to require refutation.

It is apparently not obvious to every one at first sight wherein lies the great distinction between science and art, which restrains the latter within certain impassable boundaries, while there is apparently no possible limit to the discoveries and novelties of which the former is capable. Persons who argue in the way just noticed do not see how it is the very essence of an art to have a certain ideal or standard, which is understood to be a limit, though it may never be actually attained; while in the case of science the field of operation is ever widening; that as art can only appeal to our minds or hearts through our senses, unless it does so on some principle of choice or selection, we gain no more from it than we gain from the observation of Nature itself. Now since the human form and face, containing as they do the highest qualities of beauty which Nature presents for our admiration, form the highest study to which an artist can devote himself, and since the aspects not only of human but of all natural beauty are the same in all ages, it follows that there is no new discovery to be made in the matter, and that the only possible development is in the power of expression. Not seeing, or even caring to see this, our modern critics are not in a position to judge how near to perfection in the attainment of this ideal the art of the past arrived,

or how nearly it reached the limits beyond which art is incapable of further progress. What then they really desire in the present day, is a kind of art which shall appeal more directly to minds incapable of appreciating its more elevated characteristics. This they persuade themselves would be a higher development, because appealing to a wider range. But here we must pause. A wider range—of what? Of sympathies? No; but of minds incapable of large sympathies. The argument that the progress of knowledge has given us new and more varied themes for expression, and therefore tends to produce a further development of art, must fall to the ground, unless it can be shown that these themes are of a kind that lend themselves specially to artistic treatment.

The truth is, that any attempt to rival or surpass the *chef d'œuvres* of the past must be made on the same conditions and in the same spirit that animated the producers of those great works. Were science to discover for us the cause of every natural phenomenon that exists—nay, were it to reach the inmost sources of life or light—the glow of the evening sky would be none the more or less beautiful, nor the grace of a child's movements one whit diminished or increased. These indeed are eternal and unchangeable beauties, and it is with these that the artist has to do; and though he may never be able to attain to the complete expression of them, the

end of them has always been and ever will be within the range of his conceptions, since they live for ever for his continual contemplation. I have therefore no hesitation in saying that art has lost more than it has gained by our modern modes of thought and feeling, and that if it be asked why we cannot put away the traditions of the past, and work in the modern spirit, the answer is, that the modern spirit is becoming daily more opposed to the artistic spirit, and is precisely what hampers its expression; that what is good in the art of to-day, is good in the same way, and for the same reasons, as the old; that we have no lights on the subject which were not also clear to the old masters; and that where we seem to have struck out a new path, we have only chosen one which they purposely and rightly rejected; while where we seem to have discovered a new truth, it proves to be one beside the question.

Now there are, I think, two causes to be found for the immense difference in the aim and results of our modern work as compared with that of the ancients. One of these is a noble cause; and is due to the spread of a philosophy, I might almost call it a religion, which insists that there are certain qualities, moral or divine, inherent in ideas or impressions of beauty, which the artist must recognise in order to produce a high form of art. The second is an ignoble cause, and may be broadly stated

as due to the fact that artists, from motives of indolence or interest, have allowed themselves to be led by the opinion of the public, instead of being, as of old, indifferent to it, or themselves leading the way to a better appreciation on the part of the public of the capabilities of art. Now both these causes have, curiously enough, led to the same result; I mean they have both been instrumental in leading to a prevalent belief that the imitation of Nature, or perhaps I should say the record of impressions of Nature, is the aim and purpose of the artist. It will be necessary then, before going further, that we should inquire in what way and how far a mere imitation of Nature may result in a work of art. And in speaking of imitation, I must be understood to use the word in the sense of copying. Fuseli indeed marks a difference between copying and imitation, and defines it in this way: "Precision of eye and obedience of hand are the requisites of the former, without the least pretence to choice, what to select, what to reject; whilst choice, directed by judgment or taste, constitutes the essence of imitation, and alone can raise the most dexterous copyist to the noble rank of an artist." It seems to me, however, that it is impossible for an artist not to choose what he is going to paint; he may choose stupidly, but a choice of some kind he must make; so, with this slight difference, I apply Fuseli's definition of copying to what I mean by imitation.

When I say that the belief of which I am speaking is a very prevalent one, I judge not only by what is said and written on the matter, but by the large quantity of merely imitative work which is to be met with in our numerous art-exhibitions, and the amount of success such work meets with. Now it is quite true that an imitation of Nature may be a work of art; when at its best, it calls forth all the highest technical qualities of the painter, the qualities that distinguish him as a painter from the poet, who presents to us nature in another way. These technical qualities, this "precision of eye and obedience of hand" requisite for the rendering of colour and form, include the whole art of painting, and are found in perfection only in the work of the most highly-gifted artists; but they distinctly belong only to the painter as such, and are independent of the higher mental faculties. On the other hand, being the qualities which are necessary to his existence as a painter, those without which he is nothing, they take the lowest place among the artistic faculties. The fact however remains, that a mere imitation of Nature, what is called realistic painting (though I should be inclined to call it materialistic, a true realism being of the highest forms of art[1])—the fact remains that this imitative painting may be so admirably done as to become of a high order

[1] I have endeavoured to show in the previous lecture, that idealism is only the highest form of realism.

of merit. It is the essence of portrait-painting, though for a good portrait other qualities are doubtless required. It is the essence also of landscape-painting, though for good landscapes other qualities are required, and it is all that is necessary for still-life painting. Nevertheless it is only the groundwork of ideal art, and is like the language in which the poet expresses his thoughts. It is indeed the language of art, and may be used by the artist for three purposes. It may be used by the mere imitator to present the ordinary aspects of Nature; it may be used by an artist of taste to express, through a knowledge of these aspects, his selection of what he considers best worth portraying; and thirdly, by the gifted man of genius to give form to his imagination, which, rising above mere "choice directed by judgment and taste," directs itself to the higher flights of creative powers. This imaginative power of the artist is the result of the selection and combination of the impressions received during a long and intimate acquaintance with Nature depending, according to Mr. Darwin, on the strength and variety of our impressions, on the rapidity with which they are conveyed to our mind, and our power of retaining and combining them. Mr. Ruskin also explains the imagination to be a certain mode of regarding or combining the ideas which the mind has received from external Nature, the impressions being thus obviously the groundwork for the imagination,

and the highest art that which gives form to the imagination of the artist, not that which records impressions received immediately from Nature herself. And this imaginative faculty in the hands of men of great genius is of a truly creative kind; for is not the result of their combinations akin to the creation of a new world for the enjoyment, intellectual and moral, of those who can understand it? Has not Michelangelo created for us a new and superior order of beings? whose grandeur may indeed be felt but not defined; so that writers have exhausted language in the attempt to give utterance to the emotion called up by his power. As when Reynolds impressively says, "I feel a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite;" and Fuseli, "His women are moulds of generation, his infants teem with the man, his men are a race of giants;" and Ruskin, "His inexplicable power proceeds from an imaginative perception almost superhuman, which goes whither we cannot follow, and is where we cannot come; throwing naked the final, deepest root of man, whereby he grows out of the invisible, and holds on his God home;" and again, when he speaks of "the troops of terror torn up from the earth by the four-quartered winds of the Judgment" . . . . making "the hair stand up and the words be few;"—language which bears witness to faculties of a truly creative nature, for of none other could it be

used." So then the aim of all high art is—the aim of all art (except that which professes to be portraiture)—should be to create a world in which our imaginations should be excited to the contemplation of noble and beautiful ideas; and in proportion as it fails to do this, so does it differ from the great art of the old masters, who, intentionally or instinctively, ever had this aim in view.

It is not difficult then to see the reason why landscape-painting is necessarily put in the second rank of art; for even if the impressions recorded be of the highest beauty, still it is but a record and an imitation, though still an imitation which may come under the head of Fuseli's second definition as being "directed by judgment and taste;" and it is one most difficult of accomplishment, requiring artistic skill of the highest order, on account of the subtle and fleeting effects which it is the delight and glory of the landscape-painter to recall. And of the same nature as this highest form of landscape, is the more elevated form of portrait-painting, which aims at recording not only the features and costume, but all the nobler characteristics of the subject, taking, however, a second place, as being a recording and not a creative art. Lower than this must be placed what is called still-life painting, and that kind of landscape which is of the matter-of-fact portrait kind. However beautiful the subject

chosen for imitation may be, these only appeal to us in so far as the subject in Nature itself appeals to us, or please us according to the amount of technical skill displayed. Still lower again is that kind of realistic portrait-painting which we find in the modern French school, which presents a specious appearance of originality by ignoring the necessity for presenting the subject to us under an agreeable form, and so repels us in spite of an undoubted technical skilfulness. To this kind of realism I am not sure that I do not prefer our own fashionable school of portraiture, as showing the faint tradition of a desire to ennoble the subject by the treatment. The basest degradation of the art is, however, revealed in that brutal rendering of noble subjects, in which the French realistic painters take especial delight; where with insolent bravado everything is done with a direct intention of disgusting us, and of showing how an ignoble and ferocious mood may triumph over the purity and dignity with which such themes have been hitherto invested. Of this kind is the Salomé of Regnault, which it is worth while to compare with the graceful treatment of the same figure by the early Italian painters.

Nearly on the same level, but not always so low, are the Dutch painters, who treat us to gross representations of drunken scenes; they are not so low, because the pleasure they take in these things is merely stupid, and not

cynical. With the Dutch painters indeed, as in the case of Ostade (who does not always descend to these subjects, but as often paints for us the homely pleasures of a contented if somewhat degraded peasantry), there is constantly a perception of the poetical beauty of glowing light and softened and mysterious shade, and a delicate skill in rendering them, which makes us forget the poverty and grossness of the idea. There is no such redeeming feature, however, in the same scenes when painted by Jan Steen, whose remarkable power of rendering expression only adds, as one may say, to his disgrace, so that the better the art displayed in the imitation the more base is the result.[1]

Now if we reflect a moment on the various styles of painting I have thus briefly noticed, we shall find that they are all, with the exception of the higher kind of portraiture, of comparatively modern invention; they have all come into practice since the end of the sixteenth century, up to which period art rested on that high level of which I have spoken, being of a purely creative and ideal nature. We may call them, if we please, developments of that

[1] The knowledge and experience which efface prejudice again lead me, if not to modify the severity of this paragraph, to add that the disgust excited by Jan Steen's usual subjects and his gross treatment of them, is considerably qualified when one knows and can appreciate his inimitable power of expression and masterly execution. His touch combines a certainty and a finish which in his best works are quite exquisite.

high school, but the development is from a creative to an imitative art. Now the creative necessarily includes the imitative; that is to say, a knowledge of natural forms and a fully-trained power of imitating them is what the creative artist starts from—they are the indispensable instruments of his genius; to descend again to the level of mere imitation, and to remain there as if there were nothing higher, is therefore to take up a distinctly lower position. Nor can we consider the position thus assumed to be a new one, for it is not to be supposed that the Florentine and Venetian painters, who painted the landscape of their backgrounds with such exquisite perception of the very essence of its beauty, never painted landscape pure and simple for want of appreciation; it was because they felt it but an imperfect form of art which should rely simply on its power of recalling impressions. Titian indeed has left us pictures of almost pure landscape, but they are rather in the nature of a diversion from his other and more serious work, being painted but occasionally out of the fulness of his delight in the beauty of his native mountain scenery.

And so of fruit and flower-painting. There was no painter up to the end of the sixteenth century who would not have scorned to sit down to make a picture of a bunch of roses or a plate of peaches. In their beautiful ideal representations of the Infant Christ and His Virgin

Mother, these men could indeed conceive no more delightful manner of enriching their pictures with forms of beauty than by decorating them with garlands of fruit and flowers, and we may be sure they took as keen a pleasure in painting these innocent beauties of Nature as any still-life painter of the Dutch, French, or English schools. Herein, however, lies the differenee between the old and the new feeling in such matters. A work of pure imitation *per se* was a thing unknown up to the end of the sixteenth century, not because it did not occur to the sculptors and painters of those times to produce such work, but because they rejected it as not worthy of consideration, knowing well that true art is a different thing. Modern art, on the other hand—I mean that part of it which is modern in spirit—aims at nothing more than recalling the impressions which all of us, who have a few shreds of poetic sensibility, receive from the more obvious beauties of Nature, and in this way makes an appeal to a wide circle of sympathies, though, as I have already noticed, those sympathies may be of the shallowest kind. In rendering what is purely beautiful, it finds its expression in that school of landscape-painting which has reached perhaps its highest point in some of Turner's best work; its lowest in the mass of still-life flower and fruit-painting, of which I supposed William Hunt is the most refined and skilful exponent. With that other phase of modern

art which deals not with the beauty of Nature but its grossness or inanity, I have for the present nothing to do.

For the difference above noticed I have said that there are two causes, one noble and one ignoble. To begin with the first: it seems rather startling to say that a noble idea may also be a misleading one; but it is rather in the application of the idea to art, not in other considerations to which it gives rise, that the idea appears to me fallacious, Now when I speak of a noble philosophy of art, amounting almost to a religion, it is obvious whom I have in my mind as the exponent of this philosophy or the prophet of this religion—the name of Mr. Ruskin cannot fail at once to present itself. It is with no small amount of diffidence, and with some misgiving, that I venture to differ from so gifted a writer, especially on a point which he would, and indeed in all his teaching does insist on as a vital one. With diffidence, for it is quite possible that I have missed, either altogether or in part, his meaning, or do not see deeply enough into it; with misgiving, for he has the world enough against him already, and it may be (if indeed he is ever aware of the fact) a natural source of vexation to him to find that I, occupying a post analogous to his own, and holding a responsibility for art-teaching which must make my views in some sense of importance for right or wrong, should hold on a point of vital interest in art-teaching an opinion different from his own. But

I feel that this idea of his which I am about to challenge leads to so much that is false in the art of this country, and to the production of so much of this merely *recording* work, under the notion that such is the true aim of the painter, that I boldly run whatever risk may befall me in endeavouring to point out its error.

I quote Mr. Ruskin's own words from the second volume of *Modern Painters*, where he enunciates his whole theory of art. They are as follows:—"I wholly deny that the impressions of beauty are in any way sensual; they are neither sensual nor intellectual, but moral;"[1] and again in a later work, the *Crown of Wild Olive:*—"No statement of mine has been more earnestly and oftener contradicted than that good taste is essentially a moral quality." I can hardly therefore be mistaken as to the assertion, though, as I say, I may have failed to grasp the whole of the meaning. With regard to the sense of the word "sensual," he explains it in the sentence before the one first quoted as equivalent to "æsthetic;" "the term 'æsthesis,'" he writes, "properly signifies mere sensual perception of the outward qualities and necessary effects of bodies." This, although true, slightly degrades the meaning of the word æsthetic, which may surely be applied to our mental as well as our sensual perceptions. The word sensual too has come to be used in a lower

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. chap. ii. § 1.

meaning than æsthetic (as when we speak of "sensual" pleasures, meaning the pleasures by which we gratify our lower appetites), so I prefer, for fear of misapprehension, the word "æsthetic."

Now in insisting that our ideas and impressions of beauty are in reality what Mr. Ruskin denies them to be, æsthetic, I labour under the disadvantage of appearing to abstract from them that elevated character which Mr. Ruskin has ascribed to them in his chapters on typical beauty. But observe, I do not in any way deny the truth, the philosophical truth, of this view of ideas of beauty; I only say it is beside the question, and may easily lead to false conclusions with regard to art. It is not that I hold the error to lie in the assertion of the moral quality in impressions of beauty, but in the inference that the perception of this quality is essential to the production of a true work of art, and that it is under the influence of such perception that all good art has been produced. I can indeed conceive of no writing more calculated to elevate our moral and intellectual nature than the chapters in which Mr. Ruskin treats of the different forms of beauty as types of the Divine attributes; for not only those chapters, but the whole of his works from beginning to end, set before us more exalted conceptions of the beauty and sublimity of Nature than has ever been presented to us in words, amounting, as I have said, almost to the

setting forth of a new religion of the purest and noblest type. But to me it is impossible not to feel throughout that the typical qualities are not really inherent in forms of beauty, but exist in the mind of the spectator, which may be excited with equal readiness to their contemplation, by every form of art which professes to represent them. For, be it observed, if the æsthetic nature of these impressions be denied, the seeing power of the artist, which is distinctly his æsthetic faculty—distinguishing him from those who cannot receive impressions of beauty—is left out of the account also; in which case the earnest intention of the painter, his intense love of Nature, his profound veneration and affection for the moral beauties to be found in the most trivial of God's works, may easily lead him to the belief that, as long as he devotes himself to the imitation of these works, he is setting forth the glory of the Creator in a better way than if he used his powers for the purpose of selection and combination. "Let the young artist beware of the spirit of Choice; it is an insolent spirit at the best," says Mr. Ruskin, as a sequel to saying that "if we can only admire this thing or that, we may be sure that our cause for liking is of a finite and false nature."[1] He must pardon me if I think that not only here but throughout his works he has not sufficiently separated two ideas. He confuses the faculty by which

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. ii chap. iii. §§ 11, 12.

we may all derive a moral benefit from a humble contemplation of the infinite beauties and wonders of creation, with that artistic faculty which frames for us, and forces upon us, the perception and appreciation of those generic beauties which are not obvious to the unexercised or unperceiving mind. It is no doubt true that we receive a more elevated understanding of the import of this world and of this life the more we have illustrated to us the nature of God, and in this way these impressions of beauty may have an ennobling effect on our whole moral nature; but this is really beside the question. When we are considering them in relation not to our own minds, but to their capacity for representation in art, we have to decide not what excites in us the highest religious or moral emotions, but how far art is capable of conveying these emotions to the mind. Otherwise, if we insist too much upon the moral character of the impressions of beauty, we should have to admit that the man in whom they excite the most rapturous moral enthusiasm is of necessity the greatest artist, rather than he who is distinguished by his perceptive and discriminating gift.

An artist indeed may possess his enthusiasm for beauty in this "theoretic" form, but how is he to explain in his work that this is the case? It is doubtless easy to answer that the artist who enjoys this high moral perception of beauty must show it in his work if his art is good; but

it is quite open to the spectator to deny that he finds any trace of this emotion in the work, and so to condemn it; in which case we are led back to the original proposition, that the moral qualities of beauty exist only in the mind of the beholder, who can supply them to any work of art which he considers to set forth these beauties most clearly.

If the views contained in the preceding remarks have been stated with sufficient clearness, it will now be perceived how these ideas may lead to that kind of art which I have explained as being rather of a recording and imitative, than of a creative character. The beauty of nature is very much more obvious in certain of its aspects and forms than in others. For one man who has the æsthetic faculty of being pleasurably affected by the beautiful forms and proportions of the "Venus of Melos," or Michelangelo's "Slave"—that is, by the subtle distinctions of line which in Nature go to make the difference between a form of high beauty, and one that is of a mean or vulgar kind—there are a hundred who can feel the glory of a sunset or the exquisite tints of an anemone. Since therefore the moral qualities of typical beauty are set forth to the mind which can see them, as gloriously in these last as in the first, and may even be set up on a higher pinnacle, as exemplifying types of purity and humility in contrast to mere sensual, and therefore (by a verbal quibble) degraded, love of form for its own sake;

it is not difficult for an artist to persuade himself that he is doing the most earnest and rightminded work in endeavouring humbly and patiently to imitate those beauties to the utmost of his power, and so convey to others the emotion that he feels.

Nay more, he may go further; he may persuade himself that there is nothing else worth doing, and that this work alone is of a pure and spiritual nature, all other being sensual, and therefore demoralising; so that, as with the ascetics of old, there is no kind of work too humble for him to devote himself to it. Or what is worse than this (for work done really in earnest and with a spirit of patience has always in it something of value, and I may add that no good work can ever be done without this spirit), the spectator may well imagine that the mind of the painter who laboriously produces for us again and again bunches of primroses and violets, is actuated by some exalted, earnest feeling, and in possession of some high theoretic faculty, while in truth he has only been exerting a mere imitative and technical skill and what amount of æsthetic faculty he may possess, and moreover only exercising just so much of his faculties as will enable him to make money in the quickest and readiest way. Thus it is quite possible for such a theorist, if himself destitute of the æsthetic perception, to exalt bad and fantastic work over good, if he imagines it to give a

higher expression to the typical nature or beauty; so that the critic who is not offended by the crude and discordant yellow and blue of one of Turner's later sunset pictures, may believe that he finds in it a deeper perception of the infinity and purity of the evening sky than in his earlier work, and may thus be led to ascribe to it an artistic value which it does not possess. In the same way too he might exalt the bird's-nests of William Hunt over the mighty conceptions of Michelangelo and Phidias, if he imagines he perceives this earnest faculty in the one and not in the others.

As a proof that this is possible, we have only to look at the amount of artistic talent that is spent on painting little groups of fruit and flowers, or small landscape studies, when it might be developed into something better if the artist did not stop short with the idea suggested by this train of thought, that he is in this way doing the only right work. It is not altogether Mr. Ruskin's fault that a noble theory has led to such poor results, for it is the misfortune of all great ideas that they degenerate most easily into cant; in illustration of which point I may relate an instance, which has come under my own notice, of a person who visited an artist's studio, and after having been shown pictures and designs of no mean order of beauty, begged to be allowed to see some of his "earnest work, his studies of leaves and flowers."

If then I have made my meaning clear, I shall be understood to have said that the idea must be expressed in a work of art, and not merely exist in the mind of the artist, or be supplied by that of the beholder; that the moral nature of beauty is of a kind that cannot be expressed in painting or sculpture; that therefore, as far as art is concerned, ideas of beauty are and must be purely æsthetic, and that the contrary theory is not only calculated to lead criticism astray when the æsthetic faculty is wanting, but may even induce an indifference on the part of the artist to any higher forms of beauty, than those which are at once obvious to the uneducated mind.

I will not now stop to discuss another point in Mr. Ruskin's writings which appears at first sight to bear on this subject; I mean the idea which runs throughout his works of the necessity for a right state of moral feeling, not only in producers but in nations and epochs, as essential to the appreciation and production of a noble and beautiful art. I may remark, however, that even if it can be shown that the best art has always arisen out of a pure state of national faith and domestic virtue, it does not follow that those conditions will always produce good art. If the æsthetic qualities be absent they certainly never will; and I can imagine no condition of national virtue which could cram ideas of beauty into the head of an average Englishman or Scotchman; but as far as

regards the artist himself, it appears to be unquestionable that, the æsthetic faculties being in two instances equal, there will be no comparison between the art of a man of a pure and noble mind and one of a mean and sordid nature. Indeed the very highest artistic gifts seem to imply also a noble and healthy moral condition. Michelangelo was himself one of the most simple and high-minded of men, incapable of any act of meanness; and we should find, I think, on examination that all the truly great artists and poets have been of the same nature. But I have been led much further into the question of the moral nature of beauty than I at first intended. It is a question which when once taken up is not to be lightly dismissed, and having given much serious thought to the matter, I can only hope that I have not in any way misunderstood Mr. Ruskin's meaning; still more do I hope that I have not wrongly represented it (which indeed I could only do under a misunderstanding). Here then I must leave this difficult and interesting subject, to touch upon the second cause of the poverty-stricken nature of our modern art as compared with the old. This second cause I asserted to be of an ignoble kind, and I cannot but feel a slight sense of degradation that it is necessary to express an opinion on this matter at all; I shall accordingly dismiss this part of the subject as briefly as possible.

I have spoken of this second cause as arising from the

fact that artists, from motives of indolence or interest, have allowed themselves to be led by the public instead of, as of old, taking the lead in forming the public taste. To this is to be added what I have already touched upon as another reason for the production of the amount of imitative work which we see in our exhibitions, namely, the obvious nature of the beauty of certain forms of creation. It is this which brings into the field a number of workers, having in some cases a considerable amount of technical skill, who would in ancient Greece or in Italy have taken the place of workmen under some artist of genius, but who now, yielding to a false taste on the part of the public, keep it supplied with the kind of art which it is best able to appreciate. And here I may quote an apposite saying of Sir J. Reynolds: "It is certain that the lowest style will be the most popular, as it comes within the compass of ignorance itself, and the vulgar will always be pleased with what is natural in the confined and misunderstood sense of the word." And again: "In the inferior parts of the art the learned and the ignorant are nearly on a level." With this authority I feel in a position to repeat my original assertion, that modern art has struck out for itself a path which the ancients disdained to follow, and has developed itself in the direction which no genuine artist or man of taste would ever wish to see it pursue, having lowered itself to the appreciation of a

class of patrons and admirers unknown to the older artists. We find this sort of work, it is true, among the Dutch painters as far back as the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century, but they were men who (always excepting Rembrandt, one of the greatest geniuses of the world) hardly rose to the appreciation of anything beyond mere technical skill, and were wholly destitute of imagination. We never find it, however, among the Spanish painters, truly realistic as they are in the highest sense in their portraiture, and capable through their realism of giving a terrible truth to their representations of the great tragedies of Scripture; and though we find what are called flower-pieces among the Italian painters of the seventeenth century, they are always more or less decoratively arranged. They are, in fact, a development of the decorative school of Raphael; a backward development it is true, indicating the decay of a high artistic spirit, but one which still retains something of the old idea that the beauty of nature must be brought in subjection to the mind of the artist, and used for some better purpose than merely showing that he loves it and is capable of producing a skilful facsimile. I must mention that under this head of imitation I include, besides still-life and the lower form of landscape, all that kind of figure-painting which, while it professes to illustrate a subject, is animated by no love of beauty or sentiment

of a noble kind, but contents itself with copying vulgar models dressed in some well-known and favourite costume.

It is not to be supposed that in old times the world at large was better informed on matters of art, or of better judgment, than our modern English public; but up to this date it has always been considered right that in these matters artists should have the privilege of teaching the public to discriminate between bad and good taste in art. The people of Greece and Italy were content to accept what artists gave them, only occasionally, with the popular voice of ridicule, condemning any flagrant piece of bad work presented to them. But it is now so much the fashion for artists to bow to the opinion of the public on these matters, that I doubt if it is possible for the most independent to be entirely careless about the criticisms that are passed upon his work. I do not refer to those special criticisms that for some reasons best known to themselves all newspaper editors feel bound to put forth whenever an exhibition is opened or a gallery of pictures sold: in these cases where one critic praises another condemns, so that no harm is done after all; but what I mean is, that it is almost impossible for the best artist in these days to free himself from the feeling that his work is in some way put forward for criticism, and until he can do this there is not much chance of the attainment of a better style, for such criticism is almost always

sure to be wrong, and is far worse for the artist when it praises than when it blames. Baron Leys is reported to have said, that whenever any one specially praised a portion of his picture he painted it out as soon as he was left alone. It is not all of us who have the moral courage to do this, but the principle probably is the right one.

But it may be said, and indeed this is the great argument of those who talk of the encouragement of a modern art, that the taste of the day has altered, and we no longer desire that style which appeals only to the cultivated few, but one which suits the taste of the whole public. In answer to that I would say, in the first place, with Reynolds: "We will not allow a man who shall prefer the inferior style to say it is his taste: taste here has nothing, or ought to have nothing, to do with the question; he wants, not taste, but sense, and soundness of judgment;" and, in the second place, that it ought to be clear to every one that the only way in which artists should appeal to the public is by giving it the best they can produce, and so raising the standard of taste to their own level. I have on another occasion said what I have to say concerning that class of artists, be they painters, sculptors, architects, or decorative furniture makers, who produce only for the market. Words are wasted on and against them. Nothing that I can say will avail where the dignified remonstrances, which Mr. Ruskin continu-

ally addresses to those whom in one most eloquent appeal he calls worshippers of the "Slave of Slaves," are of no effect. "You cannot serve two masters; —you *must* serve the one or the other. If your work is first with you, and your fee second, work is your master, and the Lord of work, which is God. But if your fee is first with you, and your work second, fee is your master, and the Lord of fee, who is the Devil; and not only the Devil, but the lowest of these—'the least erected fiend that fell.'" He is not, it is true, speaking specially to artists in this exhortation, but to all workers alike; but if it is true for the labourer, it is more true for the artist, who has a higher mission to fulfil than most men have. I have no desire to moralise unnecessarily, or to give myself any airs of superiority on this point; in doing our best work, which we cannot but do if our love for the work be genuine and "above the fee," we have an undoubted right to demand from the rich, who make a luxury of possessing our work, the price that they are willing to pay for it. So I say no more on this point. I had far better leave the treatment of it to that eloquent writer whose name has been so frequently mentioned in the course of this lecture, who has shown in his life and acts, in his noble and single-minded devotion to the cause he has taken up—the cause of art and the well-being of his fellow-workmen—and in his

courageous bearing against more laughter and opposition than has fallen to the lot of most men, no less than in his writings, an example of what every worker should be. He tells us that he is surprised that he is unable to force his ideas into his readers' heads. When the world is animated by as pure and high-minded a spirit as his own, he may find reason for surprise, but not till then.

If then we are to look forward to the more general production of a class of art of that high creative kind which I have dwelt on, and which is at present decidedly in the background in this land—although I must confess that I think there is now a decided move in the right direction and a desire for something more serious—we must, I think, in the first place rely on the cultivation of our perceptive faculties to show us the high beauties that lie beneath the surface of nature. We shall then get rid of the notion that little pictures of fruit and flowers and landscape are anything more than studies to help us in the execution of better work, or to be done from time to time as mementos of some specially delightful aspect of nature. Above all, moreover, we must study the works of the great masters of antiquity. "Study the great works of the great masters," says Reynolds, "for ever. Study nature attentively, but always with those masters in your company; consider them as models which you are to imitate, and at the same time as rivals with whom you

are to contend." We must also if we can, and on this point I feel the less hopeful—though every artist can if he pleases assist in the work—eliminate the mercantile spirit. It is well known that what some suppose to be an increasing love of art in this country, as shown by the high prices given for paintings, is now nothing more than a speculation in pictures; that the majority of buyers will not purchase unless they can "buy safe," as the saying is; which means that they do not buy pictures for the enjoyment to be derived from them, but in order to sell them again. If a certain pleasure in their acquisition enters into their calculations, it is just as likely to be a spirit of emulation in outdoing some other buyer, as real pleasure derived from art; and even in this case they will not buy till they feel sure that they will not ultimately lose. This may not be—is not—true of all, but it is certainly true of a large class. I never in my life remember to have experienced a feeling of deeper shame (shared by others of the artists present), than on the occasion of a late Academy banquet, when one guest after another rose to congratulate us on the enormous sums that had been given for the pictures disposed of at the late Mr. Gillot's sale. Mr. Gladstone was no exception to the number, though he finally qualified his observations with some remarks in which he showed his better nature, and with which I cannot do better than conclude, as they

sum up in a few lucid and eloquent phrases all that I have been endeavouring to express. "Do not," he said, "allow it to be supposed that the mere patronage of fashion, the mere reward offered by high price, is sufficient to secure true excellence; and remember that it is the intelligent worship of beauty, and the effort to produce it, which constitute the basis of all excellence in art; and that ages which have been poor, and which have been in some respects comparatively barbarous, have notwithstanding provided for us the models and patterns to which the most highly developed civilisations can but attempt to aspire."

LECTURE III.[1]

SYSTEMS OF ART EDUCATION.

A MOST munificent bequest has enabled this College to found a School of Fine Art. Under the name of Slade Professors, Lecturers on the Fine Arts have been appointed at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the endowments in both cases being derived from bequests by the late Mr. Felix Slade. To the liberality of the same gentleman is owed the foundation of this school.

The bequest to this College is however on a somewhat different footing from those to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, inasmuch as, by the terms of the Will, a sum of 10,000*l.* was bequeathed for the institution of six scholarships, of 50*l.* a year each, to be awarded to students in the College under the age of nineteen years, for proficiency in the Fine Arts; and in addition, a certain sum was to

[1] Address delivered at the opening of the Slade School of Fine Art in University College, London, October 2, 1871.

be devoted to the endowment of a Professorship. The Council of the College felt in consequence that the views of the testator would be better carried out by establishing a practical School of Fine Arts, than by merely appointing a lecturing Professor, as at the other Universities; and to the furtherance of this object the Executors of Mr. Felix Slade generously devoted an additional sum of 5,000*l.* for the purpose of erecting a suitable building. In the consideration of these matters much, if not most, of what has been done, especially with regard to the building of these schools, is due to the untiring, the inexhaustible energy of the late Mr. Edwin Field, Member of the Council of this College, and of the Committee formed to carry out the intentions of Mr. Slade's bequest. It will now be the duty of the Slade Professor to take care that the utmost that is possible be done in return for the efforts made by the Slade Executors and Committee, in their liberal desire to found an important School of Art in this College.

Except at the Royal Academy there is no school of any importance in London for the study of high art. In the various branches of the Government Schools, the primary object is confessedly the study of ornamental design, as applied to the industrial arts, and attention is only paid to high art in so far as the study of the figure is necessary for some particular branch of ornamental

manufacture. There are no doubt in London private schools where the study of the figure, from nature or the antique, is made the principal object, but these are chiefly used by students as preparatory for admission to the Royal Academy, where, as the schools are open to the public without payment, it is necessary to impose a certain test of proficiency before admission.

There are also in London various clubs or societies, where artists subscribe and meet together for study from the living model. These are not generally of much advantage to the students. There is always a danger of their being made use of by the members merely for the purpose of making small sketches or studies for the market, rather than for the purpose of real study for improvement; and as such are decidedly to be avoided by the student. Considering therefore the large number of students of art there are in London, and the fact that there are no schools of importance for the study of the figure, except those of the Royal Academy, where the space is necessarily limited, it is to be presumed there is room for a School of Fine Art, where the study of high art may be encouraged to the extent of its being the only object of the institution. Nor can this school ever be considered to come into competition with that of the Royal Academy, since there is no fee required for admission to the latter, while it has the advantage of

being richly endowed not only with the accumulation of advantages which an institution acquires in the course of a century, but with the talents of those whose reputation in art stands highest in the country, and who are required to give part of their time to the instruction of the students. Here on the contrary a charge is made for the instruction given, and in the uncertainty as to success, it has been necessary to make the fee a moderately high one. Before however I proceed to dwell upon the objects which we have to keep in view with regard to this school, and the scheme which I shall try to carry out, I will devote a short time to the consideration of the foreign system, which I wish to take to a certain extent as my guide in these matters.

In France a very different order of things prevails to that which is to be found in England. Besides the "École des Beaux-Arts" which answers to our free Royal Academy Schools, many of the principal French artists have private *ateliers*, separate from their own studios, which are largely attended by art students, to the instruction of whom (with a generous devotion to the cause of art to which we have not been able to arrive in this commercial country) they give up weekly a portion of time sufficient for the purpose. These schools are not only used in preparation for the École des Beaux-Arts (for which there is an admission test as at the Royal

Academy), but are frequented by the students after their admission there; indeed young artists, who have passed their studentship, frequently continue to work under their master long after they have painted and exhibited pictures. Some of these *ateliers* have acquired a name for their admirable system of instruction, only second to that of the famous art schools of ancient Italy; the schools of David, of Ingres, of Delaroche, and others have an European reputation.

The Italian schools of the Middle Ages, and of the Renaissance, were established on a somewhat different principle. The students in these appear to have been apprenticed to the masters, to have paid down a sum for admission, and to have assisted them in the execution of their great works; in return for which they received all the instruction which the master was capable of giving them; it being obviously to his interest to teach them to the best of his power. Michelangelo, it is true, received payment from Ghirlandajo, when he was received as his apprentice, but this is considered as an exception to the rule, and on account of the extraordinary gifts of the young student; and there is not the slightest doubt that the practice he acquired in painting, while assisting his master on the frescoes in Sta. Maria Novella, was of the greatest use to him when, although by profession a sculptor, he was required to undertake

in after years the decoration of the Sistine Chapel in fresco.

This system of having apprentices, or articled pupils, is practised by architects in this country, who are in the habit of receiving students for a fee; the pupils being instructed by the architect, and occasionally giving him assistance in the simpler parts of his work, thus acquiring at the same time the theory and practice of their profession. It is a custom however utterly unknown, or at all events unused, among artists, possibly because works executed on a large scale are not enough in number for artists to require that kind of assistance; but it is undoubtedly the best form of instruction that can be given, and one which I have hopes of seeing established to a certain extent in this school at some future time. It would be of the greatest advantage to the students if such of them as were competent and desired it, were employed from time to time on the professor's own works. In an essay on the genius of Beethoven, Ferdinand Hiller, speaking of the advantage Beethoven derived from serving as violinist in the orchestra of the theatre, makes the following just remarks:—"It was invaluable for the future commander of the instrumental tone-world, to have served in the line. In fact, every striving young composer ought, as a matter of duty, to act for at least one year as member of an orchestra, were it only at the great drum."

The squaring out of an artist's small designs to the full size of the canvas, the enlarging of studies, the under painting of unimportant details of architecture or background in a picture, are to the carrying out of a complete work what the big drum is to the *ensemble* of an orchestra; they familiarise the student with the simplest elements of a work of art, so that he is never at a loss how to use them later in life. This method of instruction, however, I have no idea of including in my system at present. It is extremely likely to be misunderstood by the public and the parents of the students, under the idea that the professor would be employing the powers of his pupil for his own advantage; and any attempt must be made by degrees, and be at first of the most experimental kind. I should, however, be very glad if at some future date it could be combined with the course of instruction which I propose for this school, a course which will be modelled chiefly on the system of the French *ateliers*, of which I have considerable experience.

I think there can be no question of the great advantage the French, and other foreign artists, have over us in the knowledge of all the technical and practical details of their profession. Most French students have what is called their *métier*, that is the knowledge of their craft, at their fingers' ends before they begin to paint pictures. One seldom sees in their works the helpless errors in drawing, the obvious difficulties and struggles in dealing

with the material, that characterise the works of young artists which we find in our exhibitions. The superiority of foreign artists in these matters is undoubtedly due to a habit in their schools of thoroughly following out a course of study from the living model, before beginning to paint pictures for exhibition — a practice which our students are frequently either too indifferent or too conceited to follow; but it is also due in part to the system of instruction, which allows no waste of time on useless or unimportant subjects of study.

Here in our schools of art, every kind of difficulty would seem to be put in the way of study from the life. It would appear to be considered a dangerous practice to begin studies from nature, until a long time has been passed in drawing from the antique, or from what are called drawing-models, or again, from ornamental designs. I have mentioned in the prospectus of this school what I consider the evils of this system. In the first place, it reverses the natural order of things; for until the student knows something of the construction of the human body from the living model, it is impossible he can understand the generalised and idealised forms in Greek sculpture. In the second place, the habit acquired in drawing for a long time, sometimes through a course of two or more years, from casts from the antique, which are by their nature motionless, and can always be kept in the same relations of light and shade, renders the student helpless

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when he comes to work from the living model, who can never remain quite still or take two days running exactly the same position. Thirdly, the desire of English students to paint, exhibit, and sell pictures, makes them so impatient of instruction, that it is difficult to get them to follow out any course to the end. Hence, one result of a long course from the antique is, that they frequently begin to paint for exhibition, without having thoroughly acquired the habit of working from nature; and thus, finding themselves helpless before the model, they trust to their own facility for working, as far as possible, without nature, with the aid only of the small amount of probably erroneous knowledge gained in making elaborate studies from casts; and this habit, once formed, is never shaken off, nor is further knowledge ever acquired. Possibly, moreover, the student, feeling the system to be a wrong one, imbibes a profound distrust of any course of instruction whatever; works from nature without guidance, and at his own discretion; and finds his powers crippled for life for want of that knowledge, which a good system of study in his youth would have given him.

It is difficult to imagine how the system I refer to grew to be so universal as it was in our schools when I was a student. It was then necessary to work for some two or three years in a private studio, with a view to making preparation for admission to the Royal

Academy, an admission obtained, as you are doubtless aware, by submitting a drawing of an antique figure; and although studies from nature might no doubt be pursued at the same time, it is clear that the desire of the student would be not so much to obtain a thorough knowledge of the human figure, as to be able to produce a drawing in chalk, which should attain to a certain standard of proficiency. To this end much time was wasted by the students in making elaborately finished chalk studies; a trivial minuteness of execution very generally being considered of more importance than a sound and thorough grounding in the knowledge of form. Suppose him to have been successful in entering the Academy, instead of the preparatory stage being ended at this point, more studies from the antique were necessary for the student to pass his probationer-ship, in order to be admitted a full student. This point gained, there followed more highly-finished and stippled studies in the antique school, and courses of lectures on perspective, anatomy, &c., all of which occupied frequently more than a twelvemonth of most precious time; the reward of success and punctual attendance in which was the permission to do what the student should have been set to do the first day he entered the school, that is to make studies from the living model.

I do not say that there are not many reasons, and

some good ones, to be found for this routine, but it is difficult to understand how it arose, and grew into such a system as that of which I have just presented to you a true picture. It is true that the Academy has shown its disapprobation of this method of study by making considerable modifications of late years, but the tradition that there is something objectionable in beginning early to study from the life-model, is not by any means extinct, and still lingers to a most prejudicial extent in our other art schools.

Let us look again for a while at the French Academical system. A student enters the *atelier* of one of the principal painters of the day. There is no division of classes; the students of eight or ten years standing work in the same room, and from the same model as the new-comer; if he has never had any instruction, he is set at first to make a few drawings from casts, to give him some idea of the use of his pencil, after which he begins at once his studies from the living model. Here he works daily, the model sitting for four hours a day for one week, so that he has no time to linger and loiter over the detailed execution of his work;—his time must be employed to the best of his ability. The master attends twice a week, once on the Tuesday, when the figure is sketched in, and again on the Saturday, when it is nearly finished, and

this is amply sufficient for his instruction. Meanwhile the elder students help the younger. When he has acquired a sufficient proficiency in drawing to understand the meaning of the forms, and to reproduce them with tolerable accuracy, he begins to paint from the model, perhaps painting and drawing alternate weeks, supplementing his studies by copying portions of pictures in the Louvre, and by drawing at some subscription life-school in the evening.

His object is now to enter the École des Beaux-Arts, and he has to compete for admission. He does not however prepare for this purpose an elaborate drawing to be submitted for inspection, but he is placed with the other competitors before the living model in the life studio of the École. The model sits for two hours a day for a week, and he thus has twelve hours in which to do his study. He submits his drawing, and if it be up to the standard of excellence he is admitted to the privileges of the school. Nor is the competition an easy one; for there are generally about 600 competitors, including the students who have already been admitted, and who have to make the competition again every six months, and 100 is the limit of students admitted to the school. Now for the first time he is placed before the antique. Having through a long course of study arrived at a thorough comprehension of the various aspects of

nature, he is taught to improve his style by the study of the *chef-d'œuvres* of the great artists of the past. These teach him what are the possibilities of the art he professes, and the study of them acts as a stimulus to look deeper into nature for the beauties which other men have found there. This is the real object of the study of the antique, not, as too often with us, the acquisition of an elaborate system of manipulation.

Look at the drawings sent up by the government schools of Art to the central competition at South Kensington; are any of them executed under six weeks of painful stippling with chalk and bread? How much knowledge of the figure is it to be supposed the student has acquired [1] during the process? Some of these prize drawings have come under my notice, of which the elaborately stippled background alone must have occupied more than a fortnight in the execution; and in my own student days I remember constantly to have seen the same idle and wasteful method of getting through the time. Is it a wonder that when our national prizes are given for such work as this, we are behind the rest of Europe in our knowledge of drawing;

[1] This understates the case. When I was first appointed to South Kensington, I found students at work on drawings from the antique which had already occupied them a considerable portion of the previous term (five months), and were not half-finished. I discovered that they were in the habit frequently of doing only *one* antique drawing for their certificate.

and that those who have aspirations towards a higher kind of work than the market-produce which overwhelms our exhibitions, have either to seek for a better form of study on the Continent, or to keep up a life-long struggle against difficulties, which they have never been taught to overcome, but which are the ABC of art-education abroad?

I have dwelt at some length on this description of the French system of education, because I am anxious to adopt something of the same kind in this school. It is to my mind admirably logical; and whatever modification of detail I may be inclined to introduce, I shall impress but one lesson upon the students, that constant study from the life-model is the only means they have of arriving at a comprehension of the beauty in nature, and of avoiding its ugliness and deformity; which I take to be the whole aim and end of study. It is for this reason I have instituted what is called in the prospectus, the general course of instruction, in which students who are going to study art as a profession may go through a serious and regular system, with the view of making the best use of their time. All students entering the schools will be required first to do a drawing from a figure in the antique, as a test of their proficiency; if this drawing be unsatisfactory, or show them not sufficiently to have mastered the technicalities of the material

to enable them to encounter the difficulties of drawing from the life, they will remain in the antique school until the middle of the term, when they will again submit a drawing as a test. Thus there will be two opportunities given during the term for students to gain admission to the life-school. This, it will be easily understood, does not involve any departure from the principle just laid down, of setting students as early as possible to work from the living model, but is merely adopted with a view to give them greater facility when they begin their work from the life. Beginners must remember that until they have acquired some kind of power of using their materials, and until their eye and hand have gained a certain degree of correctness, they will be longer in attaining the desired result from the living model than from easier subjects of study. It is not only that the living model is always more or less changing his position; but the forms are not always so clearly marked as in the antique, and are, especially in the portions of the figure most difficult to draw, obscured by accidents of colour and deformities of various kinds, which are always to be found, and are always changing. In the knee, for instance, even where well formed, the colour of the skin makes the form much more difficult to see and understand than in the antique statues, where one part is as well defined as another. In the hands and fore-arms, the veins are apt to swell

and conceal or disfigure the more important anatomical and general features. The feet are always a most terrible stumbling-block to beginners (and even to the most advanced students), not only on account of deformities contracted from various causes, but of the swollen veins and the purple colour which would not be found to so great an extent in a person in motion, but which naturally result from the model being obliged to stand for hours together in one position. It is true, that as far as I am able to manage it, you will be supplied with good Italian models to work from. These are not only in general build and proportion, and in natural grace and dignity, far superior to our English models; but they have a natural beauty, especially in the extremities, which no amount of hard labour seems to spoil. Their hands, though many of them may have been field-labourers in their own country, might be envied by many of a better position amongst ourselves; while their feet, bare in infancy, are covered later in life by a natural and simple kind of sandal, which protects them without altering their shape, so that they do not run that risk of disfigurement, which is unavoidable with the hard and mis-shapen shoes and boots, in which the feet of children in this country are ruthlessly imprisoned, even before they are able to walk. In short, although you will find nothing in the antique which you cannot find in nature, there is much,

even in the best models, which you will not see in the antique, and it is precisely these points which make the difficulty in drawing from nature, and which render it necessary for the student to have some acquaintance with the general character and proportions of the human figure, before attempting the study of the living model. This short preliminary practice, however, is a very different thing from the long and laborious system of working from the antique which I have already condemned.

My first wish was to include all the classes under one fee,[1] directing all the students, whether amateur or artist, to study in the classes according to their proficiency; but it was represented to me that there were many who, not desiring to make a profession of their art, would be unable to give up all their time to the study of it, and for those I have arranged that there shall be classes three times a week. But I wish it to be understood that amateurs should submit to the same thorough form of instruction they would go through if they were training for artists; if they are unable to give the time to study that would make them equally proficient, they will at all events acquire an appreciation and critical knowledge of what is noble and beautiful in the great works of the great masters, which those will never do who merely dabble

[1] This plan was ultimately adopted, and was found, as I expected, to work better in every respect.

with a little drawing and painting for amusement, and pursue it on no kind of system. Nothing would please me better than that the whole of the students attending these classes should be training as artists. This however is never likely to be the case, and there are, of course, a large number of the students who come here who have no intention of taking up art as a profession; and though I must not be understood to be desirous of eliminating this amateur element from the school (for I hold that the judicious training of amateur artists is of great value in raising the standard of taste in the country), yet I think it very advisable that they should be, as far as possible, compelled to look upon art in a serious light. The more I can make this understood, the better it will be for our school and for the interests of art generally.

There is unfortunately a difficulty which has always stood in the way of female students acquiring that thorough knowledge of the figure which is essential to the production of work of a high class; and that is, of course, that they are debarred from the same complete study of the model that is open to the male students, and for the want of which no amount of study of the antique, of books, or of anatomy, will compensate; for, as I have said before, nothing but constant practice from the model itself will suffice. But I have always been anxious to institute a class where the half-draped

model might be studied, to give those ladies who are desirous of obtaining sound instruction in drawing the figure, an opportunity of gaining the necessary knowledge. There are many prejudices to be overcome in this direction, but it may be remarked that such studies may be pursued with propriety at a public school, though in a private studio they would be nearly impossible. It is my desire that in all the classes, except of course those for the study of the nude model, the male and female students should work together; this system was tried as an experiment in the Royal Academy a few years ago, and has been found to answer admirably—and it has always been my opinion that the practice conduces to steadiness of work.

It now only remains for me to address a few remarks to those of my audience who may have the intention of entering on their course of study in this place. Let me assure them in the most emphatic terms that nothing is to be done without unremitting labour and attention. It is not the instruction you receive that will be the means of your improvement, but rather your own industry and endeavours; I can do nothing but guide your efforts in the right direction. In a word, you must not rely on me to teach you to draw and paint; my system of instruction will be directed to the end that you do not waste your energies on the study of what is

useless or prejudicial. Sir Joshua Reynolds puts this as usual most concisely when he says that "no method of study will lead to excellence, yet it may preserve industry from being misapplied." Industry on your part is the point of the greatest importance to you in your career as students of art. Those even who have no intention of devoting themselves to the arts as their profession, will find it quite worth their while to give all their energies to the work in hand while they are engaged in it; their taste and love for the beautiful and noble in art cannot but be in this way improved. There is no influence in the world so ennobling as that of the fine arts; to be able to appreciate and understand the vast conceptions of a Michelangelo or a Beethoven, is the highest pleasure we are capable o receiving.

Without understanding, genuine appreciation is impossible; without study, understanding is impossible that is why I should wish the amateur to apply himself to his work as earnestly as if he had to make his living by the practice of art.

It will be well for the young artist also to pay attention to what I have said: that it is the love and appreciation of what is truly beautiful in nature that makes the great artist. He is not concerned only with the external beauties, which are obvious to all the

world, but with those also which underlie the surface, and which only the mind of the artist, stimulated by continued study, can discover. The more you work from nature, the more astonished you will be at the beauties you will find; and it will be your pleasure as artists to point them out to others. Remember that the true object of art is to create a world: not to imitate what is constantly before our eyes. If it were possible to invent anything of sublime or beautiful beyond the realm of nature, the artist would be justified in doing it; but there is not only no possibility of this, but there is fortunately also no need of it. Nature contains greater depths of beauty than we can fathom; and although two or three men in the world's history have risen to so high a conception of beauty that their works have acquired a just right to be called "the creations" of genius, they have had no more to inspire them than what you yourselves may find by searching around you. Indeed they may be said to have had less, for you possess, as an additional property, the example of their unremitting devotion to stimulate you to labour without flagging; and the results of their genius, to goad you on to rival them on the toilsome and arduous path, which may lead you to the achievement of an equal excellence.

LECTURE IV.[1]

HINTS ON THE FORMATION OF A STYLE.

In the address I delivered on the occasion of the opening of this school, I endeavoured to set forth the system in use in foreign, especially French, schools;[2] a system which places Continental artists on so much higher a level as regards technical excellence in Art, than our own. That amazing facility of execution, which enables a French or German artist to attack a canvas ten or fifteen feet square, with as little trouble as it costs us to begin a cabinet picture, while he preserves at the same time the due unity of effect and an even thoroughness of execution, is the result of that system of constantly working from nature, which, giving but a limited time for the completion of a study, obliges the student to work in the simplest and most straightforward manner. This is the system which I have

[1] Given at the opening of the second session of the Slade Schools, Oct. 1872.

[2] Lecture III., p. 97.

introduced in these schools, having for my aim to obviate as far as possible that timid and unmethodical style of work, which strikes us as the prevailing fault in our exhibitions. This school is but in its early days, and it is difficult to see as yet how far I may have been successful; but I may mention here what I find to be a serious drawback, and indeed the greatest obstacle I have to encounter. I refer to the absence in this place of those traditions, which are to be found in long-established Academies of Art, but which an institution like this must necessarily at first starting be without. There are as yet no elder students to whom the younger ones can look as guides; to see the elder ones who have been brought up in the traditions of the place at their work is perhaps the greatest help a young student can have.

I must confess to having felt somewhat of a shock each time I have looked at the drawings and paintings which were done for the prizes at the end of the last session;—I must confess to having been shocked at the crude absence of style that characterizes them; I mean of that free and intelligent manner of drawing, which is to be found in all the French Schools of Art, at a very early stage of advancement. I have often wondered how far this was due to my own method of instruction.

The above consideration however somewhat consoled me; for I reflected that students learn mostly by examples,

and a style can only be formed after a school has existed for a lengthened period. It is with a view to encourage among you a good style of work, that I now address you, my remarks being intended to direct you where to look for examples for imitation.

Although I have adopted here a system of instruction pretty closely following the French, I do not by any means consider, or intend to convey the impression, that the result at which French artists arrive is to be held up for imitation. Much as I admire their technical facility, I do not consider that they make that use of it which it should be the aim of a true artist to keep before him. French art has indeed, of late years, enormously degenerated. Thanks to the continued and persistent efforts of the "realistic" school, it is descending lower and lower to a mere brutal materialism, any subject which may afford a means of displaying technical ability being eagerly seized upon, and as every artist vies with his fellows in the production of the most sensational results, it is difficult to say at what depths of the horrible and morbidly sensual it may finally arrive.[1] It is certainly not with this intention that the great school of David (the model of the existing

[1] This is a true prediction of what has since happened. The French portion of the picture gallery in the Exhibition of 1878 was remarkable for nothing so much as the display of sensational horrors treated in the most realistic style, and on an immense scale.

French *ateliers*) was founded; his aim being the lofty one of trying to recall the glories of antique art.

It would moreover seem impossible for French artists to conceive of ideal beauty as existing *in* nature itself. Their ideal school was a failure; it was never more than a cold and uninteresting misconception of the Classical idea, and had no foundation in nature whatever; it copied the letter but failed to seize the spirit of antique art. Ingres, the pupil of David, was the great outcome of this school; and is the real founder of the present excellent system of instruction in France. He himself achieved a mastery of his material, which places him foremost as a painter (using the word in its limited sense), in modern times; his works are in roundness and richness of modelling comparable only to those of Velasquez, while there is in them a severe precision of drawing, which is worthy of all imitation; as regard colour however, his flesh-tints are invariably cold and clayey, while any local colour is sure to be harsh and disagreeable, and his works are generally uninteresting in idea. On the other hand, he has the rare merit in a French artist of having painted the nude female form naturally, gracefully, and without affectation; his picture of *La Source* stands almost alone for combining charm and purity, and is equally free from the sensuality, which degrades most French pictures of this kind, and from that false symplicity which shocks us still

more. But though painted and modelled in the most masterly manner this and other of his figures are wanting in the higher forms of beauty, which we see in the noblest Italian works.

The French school as I have said has rapidly degenerated. Ingres, and one or two of his pupils who formed themselves the most successfully on his style, are dead, and during the last ten years of the Empire, the works of the French artists ran into every kind of extravagance. Their conception of ideal beauty is not that it is to be found by looking for it in nature, but rather by adding something to nature of their own devising; this something is chiefly a theatrical and sickly sentimentality, which is peculiarly their own, but which is absolutely devoid of any real and inherent beauty. When on the other hand they paint nature unidealized, it is almost always on the disgusting or the horrible that they seize for imitation, with a cynical pleasure which is no less characteristic than their false and bombastic sentiment. But the skill with which all this is done seems to grow every day more remarkable, and it must be understood that in making these remarks, I do not include the whole French school, but am speaking of that which, for the present at all events, is in the ascendant. The poetry which they seem unable to feel or express in the higher branches of the art, shows itself in the most charming manner in their

feeling for the beauty of landscape and country-life generally. The stage-peasant and the stage-landscape of our English school are almost unknown to them, and their skilful and simple method of painting places them far above us in all the lower branches of the art. This skill which shows itself in all the work they do, however false we may find the sentiment, is entirely, or almost entirely, due to that thorough training in the constant study of nature which all French students receive from the very beginning of their career, and it is their fault or misfortune if they cannot derive a better result from their studies. To this system I shall then adhere, as I believe that the English love of nature, which is unmistakable, and runs through all the efforts of our poets and painters from the highest to the lowest, should lead us under a good system to a much higher result. If the facility of English students is not so great, they must make up for it by working all the harder, and the mastery they acquire by these means, under good guidance, will be worth more than any natural talent misapplied.

But the love of nature alone is not sufficient: it may easily induce a trivial realism which is the besetting sin of many of our younger artists. What is wanted is an appreciative love which is capable of selecting what is worthy of imitation, and setting aside what is unimportant. It is to this end that your studies are to be directed.

Your work from the models, which are daily set for your regular study, is not only to enable you to paint what you desire with ease and skill, but is to have a better result than this in forming your ideas of the beautiful, and enabling you to distinguish good from bad; for the study of nature is not the end of art, but merely a means of enabling you to express your ideas. Mr. Ruskin says on this point in his *Modern Painters*—"He who has learned what is commonly considered the whole art of painting, that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully, has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed. He has done just as much towards being a great painter, as a man who has learned how to express himself grammatically, and melodiously, has towards being a great poet." This power of selection you will not find come easily to you for some time, nor indeed is it desirable that it should do so until you have obtained a certain command over your powers of execution; but as you grow in knowledge a light will break in upon you, so that you will take more and more pleasure in whatever characteristics of beauty you may find, and as the eye gains practice, and the hand acquires facility, you will be able to draw and paint with more freedom and certainty, and thus to acquire that style, without which art must be limited to a mere reproduction of the

ordinary aspects of nature. It will be well also to remember that all the great and beautiful works of art which have been produced in the world have no other foundation than that nature which is set before you for study: indeed you have an advantage which the producers of those great works had not, in that you are able to contemplate them for your guidance. It is therefore above all things necessary that you add to the study of nature the study of the works of the great masters.

There is in this institution, as I have explained, no tradition to help you, nor does there exist in England any such tradition; for such as there was in the days of Reynolds and his immediate successors, has now degenerated and indeed almost died out; the one faint remnant being that study of the antique, on the disadvantages of which as pursued in our schools, I have already sufficiently dwelt. We must then form a style on some other school, having none of our own, not by imitating the manner of any particular painter or school of painters, but by studying their method of studying. If you think that this will induce mannerism, it is worth while to try and realize how far one painter is independent of another, how far you yourselves when you think you are most original, are influenced by the works of others. You have probably no conception of the amount of unconscious imitation of particular styles of work you are

employing when you think you are only affected by nature. But you can realize it to yourself, if you consider the works of the greatest geniuses of the early Italian school, in their representations of the simplest objects, when they were proceeding entirely by the light of their own intelligence, and had no predecessors to guide them. You will find that Giotto, a man endowed with an artistic faculty and imaginative genius, in no way inferior to the greatest of his successors, whose certainty of hand was so great that there is an anecdote of his having drawn a perfect circle with one sweep of his pencil, could not, in the very highest exercise of his powers, produce a better representation of a tree or flower than any boy with a taste for drawing might do at eight years old. I give you this instance to show you how helpless any artist is, when depending entirely on his own resources, and how certain it is that you are influenced by the works of other men in all that you do, even when you are most unconscious of it.

It will almost always be found that it is our more immediate surroundings which influence us the most. Andrea Mantegna, the greatest artist of his time, whose works in some respects give us more pleasure than those of any other, devoted his life to the worship of the antique, and yet rarely succeeded in drawing a figure in correct proportion, or in getting rid of a certain rigidity

in the movement and expression of his figures; the fact being that the art of the day, being undeveloped in these matters, had more influence on him, doubtless unconsciously to himself, than all the beautiful works of past ages which were the objects of his study. What you are certain to do in the first place is to imitate each other, and in the present unformed state of your powers this will not do you much good. You cannot also but be affected by the general style of work which prevails in the present day, and I would have you get as much good out of this as you can, but it will not take you very far. If then our immediate surroundings are such as are not likely to induce a good style of drawing and painting, and with certain exceptions the spirit of the work which fills our exhibitions is not generally calculated to produce an elevating effect, we must, to come back to what I have said, try to seek a counteracting influence elsewhere. The spirit of antiquity, as shown in its sculpture, is too far from us to produce a very strong effect on a student of painting; it is only after much study that its real beauty and intrinsic truth begins to be intelligible enough to influence his work. It is therefore to the great masters of painting, and especially of the Italian school, that I would rather direct your attention. If in our visits to the National Gallery, we study the pictures of the great masters of that school, from the time of the

revival of art in the thirteenth century to its culmination in the works of Raffaelle and Michelangelo we shall find in them, and in them alone, not only everything that is required for our guidance in the practice of Art, but nothing that we should consider it necessary to avoid.

The causes of this distinguishing excellence are principally two. First, there was a universally prevailing love of what is beautiful in nature, which, leading them instinctively to select what is worthy of treatment in art, never permitted them to choose an ugly, vulgar, or mean subject, or to treat a beautiful one in a mean or vulgar way, and which made them look upon all art in so serious a light as to invest naturally all they did with beauty and dignity; and, secondly, a love of beauty of workmanship which seems never to have failed them, so that we may look in vain through their pictures for any sign of fatigue, with its inevitable accompaniment of coarse and slovenly execution. In both cases, in fact, we find amongst them such a genuine love for, and all absorbing interest in their art, as leads them never to tire of reproducing beauty with the most perfect skill of which they are capable. These, therefore, are the models to whom I would have you look for the spirit by which you are to be guided in your work.

You will find the works of many artists of other ages and countries equally full of invention and imagination,

but it is only in those of the Italians that we find represented every form of beauty. Especially in the workmanship of their pictures is this noticeable, and it is to this point that I wish to call your attention. Even where they were most wanting in what we understand by masterly execution, as in the case of the early Florentines, Giotto and his followers, the workmanship of their pictures charms us by its noble simplicity and absence of pretension; and as their power of execution developed, it became more and more what Mr. Ruskin calls "precious," that is, done as if it were a thing of value in itself, and not as a mere display of technical skill. The most consummate examples of this are to be found in the pictures of Andrea Mantegna, and Filippo Lippi; especially of the former, who combines with the most inexhaustible imagination and invention that ever fell to the lot of an artist, and powers which include the whole range of art, from the most playful fantasy to the profoundest and most passionate tragedy—a skill of workmanship so minutely and marvellously delicate as to defy imitation.

I am thinking more especially at this moment of one of his pictures in Florence, a triptych, containing an Adoration of the Magi, a Circumcision, and an Ascension. The finish of this picture is such as to amaze us, and as I have said, defies copying. A noble work of this master is in the National Gallery, and will afford an example of what

I mean. Look at the refinement with which the drapery is drawn, the wonderful delicacy of handling with which the gold-lights are laid on, the beautiful and loving spirit which has presided over the execution of the foliage in the background, and indeed of every detail in the picture, and you will begin to have an understanding of what I mean by workmanship as such, and how an artist proceeds whose hand has been thoroughly trained, and who is truly in love with his art. The two pictures by Filippo Lippi, the Annunciation, and the picture of Saints seated in a circle are equally worthy of attention. Everything in them, as in all his pictures, and in those of Sandro Botticelli, whose works are frequently hardly to be distinguished from those of Filippo Lippi, is done with this one idea of making the whole work as full of charm and beauty as possible, every detail being subservient to this end. Another gem of workmanship, of a school rather more developed, is the picture of *Peter Martyr*, by Giovanni Bellini. In this work the dramatic action is kept subordinate to the pastoral scenery in which it takes place, and as such it cannot be said to be the highest representation of the subject; but there is a certain *naïveté* in this idea which is not without its charm as showing that the horrible and tragic had no attractions for him; while the spirit of beauty and love for what is delightful in form, and colour, and sentiment breathes throughout the whole, and has expressed

itself in the most perfectly beautiful piece of workmanship that ever was put into a picture; I mean the painting of the green forest which makes the principal part of the background. There will also be found equal perfection of workmanship in the best pictures of the early Flemish schools, notably in the works of Memling and Van Eyck, whose pictures are unsurpassable for delicacy of execution, and as such are most worthy of examination and study. This quality is however combined with such an amount of awkwardness, and ugliness, and poverty of form, wherever the human face and figure are represented, as to modify considerably the pleasure we derive from their contemplation.

It is not my intention however, to make a critical examination of the pictures in the National Gallery. I have pointed out to you a few of the most noticeable for the perfection of their workmanship, and leave you to find out others for yourselves. Now I do not want you to imitate the special *manner* of these painters of the fifteenth century (although you might do much worse) so much as to work in their untiring spirit of love for nature and their art. My object has been moreover to show you what beauties are to be looked for in their work, knowing that with many students the difference between the spirit of modern work, and the Italian art of the Middle Ages, is so great as to render it difficult for them to find where

the special beauty lies which so enraptures its admirers; in which case a hint of this kind is often sufficient to set the student thinking, and to animate him with something of the same spirit.

For the immediate imitation of the pupils of this school, I wish that it were possessed of a few specimens of paintings of the good schools of a later period, that they might be copied, and the actual method of painting studied in this manner. To copy a portrait by Titian or Velasquez is a better and surer means of forming a good style of handling than all the precept in the world, provided that the work be done under good direction; but we have unfortunately nothing that we can look to nearer than the National Gallery. The large painting which has been presented to us is of great value, as setting before you one of Raffaelle's most imaginative and most masterly compositions; and I shall refer you to it as a study of design; but as a painting, although a fair and careful representation of the original, it is hardly so good for study, being after all but a copy, and a copy of a fresco. As a means, however, of forming the best possible style of drawing, I have acquired some of the most instructive of the series of photographs from Michelangelo's ceiling in the Sistine Chapel. These are placed in the art library, which, though small at present, will I hope some day become of more important dimensions, and be

frequently consulted by the students. It is needless for me to express my admiration for these works; they are almost beyond admiration, and remain for the amazement of the world for all time. What is the point now is that their subtle truth to nature renders them most admirable studies for students in art to copy, and I have come to the conclusion that the study of them, though doubtless very difficult, on account of the imperfections which necessarily occur in the photographs, will do more to correct that crude want of style, which I have mentioned as a defect in the drawing in this school, than any works of any other master that I could put before you. You will learn also to appreciate these works by copying them, and gain by that means an insight into the possibilities, if also into the extreme difficulties, of your art. You will find also in the Library, among the books presented by Mrs. Grote, large volumes of prints of almost all the famous pictures in the world of the later schools; though of the time before Raffaelle there is hardly any representation, this collection having been formed at a time when the excellences of that period of art were ignored. These prints will be of great use in forming your style, and should be much consulted for the study of composition, especially those from the works of Raffaelle, who is fully represented; they will also be of service in acquainting you with the great works which exist in foreign countries;

on which point many of my students seem painfully ignorant. You will find also books of prints from the Dutch painters, whose pictures are generally remarkable for the technical skill and subtle appreciation with which the more vulgar and ordinary aspects and themes of nature are represented. Many of these prints moreover are gems of engraving of their kind. I have also acquired for the Art Library, in addition to Mrs. Grote's gift, some standard works, such as Vasari's lives, which you will do well to read, and some books on costume which will be of great assistance to you in treating the subjects which I shall give out for composition from time to time. Reynolds's writings, which I have before recommended, have been removed from the General Library to ours, as well as some others.

I have drawn your attention more especially to the library, because I hold that it is quite as important for an artist to cultivate his mind as his hand. The results of want of education and cultivation are painfully apparent in much of the work that is done in England; and the educated and intelligent man is to be recognised at once by his works; and so also, I may add, is the stupid and the ignorant. The artistic gift is doubtless bestowed indiscriminately, and a man of genius will always produce results that will astonish, if not charm us. But unless his mind is cultivated, not only by a

good general education, but by a knowledge of what other artists have done in the world before him, his range of themes will be of the most limited nature; and we shall find that most of the artists of the so-called realistic school, that is the school which realises only what is common and obvious in nature, are of this ill-educated kind. It is no sign of genius to despise the work that has been done before us; but such affectation is not uncommon, and is generally the offspring of ignorance and conceit. For this reason I am especially glad that I have been able to arrange for some lectures on Classical Archæology. Independently of its artistic associations, there is no more interesting study in the world than that of ancient history through its antiquities, and when we consider that, except by means of limited fragments of written history that remain to us, it is entirely through its art that we are enabled to construct the history of the ancient world, the matter becomes one which is especially interesting to artists. The converse holds equally good; it is a knowledge of the history of the past that helps us to understand its art.

You will observe that I have made a special point in this lecture of drawing your attention to the excellence of workmanship which is to be found generally in the work of the old masters, and especially of the

Italian painters. I am afraid that there may have been a slight misunderstanding of some of the points in the system that I have laid down for study in this school. It may have been supposed that, because I allow but a limited time in which each study is to be done, I do not recognise the great importance of careful finish. What I really want is that you should acquire the habit of finishing as highly as you can in the time given. I may add that the time allowed is ample for the purpose, and if you use it properly you will gain a direct method of work which will go far to give you that style in which the drawings here have hitherto been deficient. I have seen drawings by French students done in six sittings of two hours each which are quite as highly worked up as any turned out in our English schools in double the time. Remember that the first essential to a good artist is that he should be a good workman; the art of painting in the days of which I have spoken so much, was studied regularly as a trade; and young men were apprenticed to an artist to learn their business, just as they are now to a jeweller or silversmith. If we look at the English pictures of the present day, we shall find that this point is the one in which they are most deficient. The sort of execution which passes current is generally of the flimsiest kind. Now it is not given to every one to be a

genius, but all can be good workmen. The fine artist doubtless is he who, as Midas turned everything he touched into gold, cannot make a study or design without giving it some character of beauty; but it is, alas, given to but few of us instinctively to beautify everything we touch. Those who have this gift by nature in any high degree, are the great geniuses of the world, and may be counted on the fingers. But the qualities of good workmanship are such as can be attained by any one who has the true spirit of love for his art; and nothing will ever make me believe—nothing I hope will ever induce you to believe—that it is necessary to work down to the level of the taste of the age. This is the true cause of the degeneracy of the art of this time; but it is easy to rise above it, if we make up our minds to be influenced neither by the interest of our pockets, nor by the vulgar criticism of the ignorant.

LECTURE V.

THE TRAINING OF ART STUDENTS.[1]

THE object of my present lecture is to systematise and classify, as far as possible, the instruction which is, for various reasons, necessarily imparted in a somewhat desultory manner.[2]

With this intention, I have thrown my remarks into the form of a short sketch of the course of study which I consider best for an art student, and shall describe as I go on the successive points or posts which he will have to occupy.

Now for the purpose of producing a work of art of the higher order, there are four subjects of which the

[1] This lecture was first delivered at the opening of the third session of the Slade Schools, and afterwards in a modified form at Leeds, and again, with alterations, at the distribution of prizes at the Middlesborough School of Art. I give it here in the form in which it might have been given at University College, with the subsequent alterations.

[2] Thrgouh the personal nature of the teaching, the school being new, and the scholars few, and not sufficiently advanced to divide into classes.

painter must acquire knowledge—form, tone, colour, and finally, composition. The knowledge of the first three is gained through the study of nature; the last is rather an effort of the inventive or imaginative powers, and involves the harmonious combination or arrangement of form, tone, and colour, either separately or together.[1] Thus we may have a composition of form only, as in an outline drawing of a group of figures; a composition of light and shade, which even in its simplest expression, as a mere study of effect, acquires of necessity some element of form, however vague or rudimentary; and a composition of colour, which must also in the same way be combined with form, either indefinitely as in a coloured sketch, or definitely as in a stained-glass window, or any subject coloured with flat-tints, like the early Etruscan wall-paintings. Lastly, we may have compositions of all three combined, which form what we consider the most complete kind of picture; for though it may occasionally be necessary that figure-pictures, where they are used for purely decorative purposes, should be composi-

[1] It would of course be a mistake to talk of a composition of tone. "Tone" does not mean exactly "light and shade," but the knowledge of tone means the knowledge of the correct relations of light and shade, and is necessary in order to make what Leonardo calls "That just and natural dispensation of lights and shadows, usually expressed by the word Chiaroscuro." The study of tone must be made from nature, and the knowledge applied to compositions of light and shade.

tions of form and colour only—that is, outlines with flat-tints or a minimum of light and shade—this cannot be considered the highest expression of the art of painting. It is clear then that to make a perfect composition, the student must first acquire a knowledge of form, of tone, and of colour; and to this end his studies must be directed; but it is also clear that though we may make a composition of form only, without light and shade or colour, an element of form must enter into any arrangement of masses of colour, or of chiaroscuro. It is then to the study of form that the attention of the student of painting must first be directed.

There is no doubt that the simplest way of beginning is to make copies of drawings in outline, beginning with easy forms, and progressing to the more difficult; and the School of Design drawing-books by Dyce are admirably adapted to this purpose. But this course may easily be carried too far, and in my opinion is useful only at the very earliest stage, as a means of acquiring steadiness of hand. The youth who comes to a school of art to study may be supposed to have displayed sufficient fondness for drawing to have practised it in some form or other from his earliest years, and therefore to have acquired some elementary knowledge. The surest and best method therefore for him on entering the

school, is to begin to make outline drawings from the round, that is from solid objects, by which, under proper direction, he can attain as great steadiness of hand as he could from the flat. In pursuing this preliminary course his object will be to train both eye and hand in an equal degree, by endeavouring to draw with certainty as well as with accuracy; that is to say, he should, after first adjusting on his paper the proportions of the object he is copying, try to make his outline at once clear and correct, and draw it with as firm and steady a hand as a young student can command under the difficulties with regard to accuracy which must beset him at the outset.

The object, then, of the student is first to attain to a definite conception of the form before him, and in this he will fail unless he can express it on paper with a definite outline; next, to acquire the power of expressing the form with certainty and rapidity, which he will never do if he acquires a habit of drawing inaccurately to begin with, though he may have the full intention at the time of altering his lines to get them right in the end. In the third place, he must acquire steadiness of hand. This he must gain by the habit of drawing his lines continuous from one determined point to another, without retouching, or, as it is called, painting the line,—a point as important in figure as in

ornamental drawing; the quick, and at the same time certain, apprehension of the form he is copying, and the correct rendering of it on a flat surface being the end the artist aims at throughout his whole career.

Thus much conceded, the question arises as to the best models for a beginner to work from. My answer would be that he cannot do better than begin with what he intends ending with, that is, the study of the figure.[1] All else is usually but time lost; at whatever stage the drawing of the figure is taken up, the student will find it as difficult as if he started with it at first. At the same time I admit that what are called drawing-models, that is, solid geometrical figures in wood, may be of occasional use in the case of young or helpless students. If a student placed before a cast of a statue or head shows himself incapable of rendering it in any way intelligibly, he may well be set to do a few drawings in outline from geometrical models; when, if he does not soon show signs of progress, it is probable that he has mistaken his vocation; but this is of course a matter for the discretion of the instructor, some students being much slower than others. It would be dangerous, however, to devote too much time to this stage of study;

[1] It must be understood that these remarks are throughout addressed to students of figure-painting for pictures. For ornamental design a more extended course of outline drawing from the first is necessary.

especially when carried to the extent to be observed in the schools of the Science and Art Department,[1] it involves a mere waste of time; and the student should practise by preference from casts of heads, hands, feet, &c., proceeding by degrees to full-length antique figures.

Thus far I have dealt only with the earliest and most rudimentary stage of instruction, and most people who have any knowledge, or hold any theories on the subject of art-teaching, will probably not be of a very different opinion on these points to myself. We come however now to a matter requiring more serious consideration. The aim of the student, after he can so draw an antique figure or head as to give correctly the general action and proportions, and to mark definitely the shape of the limbs and features, and the more important divisions of the body within the outline, is to acquire the power of presenting it to the eye as a rounded form. Now, outline drawing goes but a little way towards expressing form,—or rather, though it may express with perfect accuracy the outer or boundary lines of forms, it does very little towards expressing those inner markings which indicate the construction of the figure, and which are made apparent to us only through shades more or

[1] As much time used to be wasted over highly-stippled drawings of cubes and cones in Schools of Art, as over the antique figures referred to in Lecture III., p. 106.

less defined and gradated. It would therefore be an error to carry too far the practice of drawing in mere outline, for it is after all a conventional method of representation, and to express correctly and intelligibly in this manner the inner markings of the body requires considerable knowledge of drawing.

There is a danger therefore of the student acquiring a mannered way of seeing and drawing the muscular and constructional indications, and it is much better that he should proceed, as soon as possible, to study them as they really present themselves to him—that is in light and shade—than that he should confine himself to a hard and unreal outline. I may, however, remark in passing that a student may derive much benefit in this early stage, if he looks at, and in leisure moments copies, good outline drawings of the figure, such as Flaxman's illustrations to Homer and Æschylus, so as to learn how far it is possible in pure outline to express the markings of the muscles and joints in the nude figure.

These illustrations have another advantage in being excellent studies of composition for beginners; and although Flaxman may sometimes be found to give to the faces of his heroes a somewhat exaggerated expression, through a mannerism, contracted apparently in the endeavour to impart to them something of the character

of the ancient tragic mask, yet there is a knowledge of the human form, and a grace and purity of design displayed in the grouping of the figures, and arrangement of the draperies, which is well worth the attention of the young student.

We suppose the student to have now arrived at the stage of what is commonly called "shading" his figures, and he enters upon the study of *tone*, which is probably, of all the departments of study to which he has to devote himself, the most subtle, the most complicated, and the most comprehensive. I might almost go on to call it the most important, for it is so intimately bound up with the study of form and colour, that it cannot be kept separate, and is, so to speak, continually interfering with the apprehension of them. It is, however, precisely the point of which our English students, teachers, and painters (always omitting from the latter category certain men of eminence, but including those who practise the more popular kind of work) appear to have the most imperfect appreciation. This I believe to be due entirely to the general system of education in our Art Schools. You will find that as a rule the pictures in our exhibitions are in their several degrees strong on every point but this one.

You will find pictures in which the story is well and pointedly told; pictures which are in a high degree

poetical in conception and sentiment; pictures harmonious in colour, thoughtful in arrangement of forms and lines, and effective in light and shade; but such as have any value or beauty as studies of tone, are only occasionally to be found, and those almost entirely among painters who have studied or worked abroad. Special stress should be laid on the words *effective in light and shade* used above, for it is the bane of English painters that they will seek for effect in their pictures by any kind of false trick of light and shade, rather than by a scientific combination of their true relations. This particularly is a fault that students are apt to run into under the influence of bad example. They cover a want of thought in the composition of their pictures, and are constantly advised by their friends to do so, by heightening a light here, or deepening a tint there, in defiance of all the laws of nature. There is no advice more commonly given to a young painter, if one of the inferior personages in his picture interferes with the relief of the principal figure, than that he should "scumble it over"; that is, place it in a sort of fog (dignified by the name of aerial perspective), to "give it air," as it is called; when the fault all the time is in the original composition, which was *so ill-arranged in the grouping* that some false device of this kind is necessary to bring out the intended effect. There are many pictures by artists

of reputation among us where this stupid trick is resorted to, to say nothing of others of the same kind.

Now the perception of tone, in its extended sense, means the perception of that harmonious unity of effect, under every circumstance, which necessarily pervades all objects and scenes in nature; and the right application of those laws to compositions of form and colour; and it is impossible, unless a student is constantly directed to the acquisition of that perception, from the time when he begins by shading to give relief to his drawings, that he should ever afterwards be able to impart it to his pictures. The choice of effect depends indeed on the taste of the painter.

Michelangelo loved a bold relief of light and shade, his figures being generally half in light and half in shadow, with a view to developing to the utmost not only those beauties of form which are best displayed under those conditions, but those qualities of modelling with imperceptibly gradated half-tints and transparent shadows, to which this particular effect of light and shade lends itself. Rembrandt loved to relieve his principal figure or group, or, in a portrait, the most important portion of the subject, in a bright but softened sunlight, against a luminous gloom. Titian preferred the broad, open, and rather shadowless effect of the glowing light of the evening sky; but each in his kind was master of the

effect he preferred; and their pictures never fail to convey the impress of absolute truth and unity of tone. Compare such works as these with our ordinary exhibition pictures, which are either forced up with a consciously false treatment to make effect in the exhibitions, or which lose all the broad truth of tone which is to be found in nature, in the desire to impress on the spectator's notice the infinite labour that has been bestowed on every trivial detail. Nor is it necessary to be consciously false on this point; ignorance of the importance of a true perception of tone will allow the painter to obtrude any or every other quality to the detriment of this.

It may be, as I have said, a point of sentiment, or of poetry, or of humour, or something inferior to these which is put forward, while the other more important matter is forgotten. The perception of this quality of tone is indeed a matter of education, the importance of which is hardly felt among us; and this want is in great part due to the waste of the time spent, at an early stage of work, over laboriously-executed drawings from the antique and other models, in which the primary object of an intelligent understanding and reproduction of the model is subordinated to the acquisition of a laborious style of lithographic shading.

I have no hesitation in saying that I believe most of

the want of perception of unity of tone among our artists to arise from the common habit of laborious work with the chalk-point. This use of the point, at all events in the way which is prevalent in our art-schools, not only involves loss of time, and the sinking of the study of form and tone in that of mere execution, but concentrates the attention of the student on minute details which blind him to the general effect. It is for this reason that I have always advised my students to make use of the stump, rather than of the point, in shading their drawings; for the former, while it allows of any amount of finish of modelling, lends itself particularly well to the production of broad effects of tone, and is moreover much easier for a beginner to manage than the complicated method of shading with the point. There is, it is true, an intelligent use of the point in drawing, which proceeds naturally from the study of the construction of the figure; but it should be contracted in actual drawing from the figure, and the lines made in shading with the point should always be indicative of the construction. Any student who shows a disposition to work in this way with the point should be encouraged in the use of it, but for the majority, the stump is by far the best means of learning to shade. As there is doubtless a certain amount of mechanical difficulty to be got over in its employment, it is here again that

drawing-models may be made use of in teaching the beginner how to make flat and evenly-gradated shades; care being taken that he does not spend more time over this than is necessary to facilitate his work for the future.

This first mechanical difficulty got over, the one main point the student has to attend to is the general tone or effect of the object he is working from, whatever it may be. And this he will find his great difficulty, not only as a beginner, but all through his course of study, and indeed through his life; it is so easy to see detail, and it is so difficult to subordinate it to the general tone. The student must constantly keep in mind his subject as a whole, while at the same time he does not omit to give all details their proper value. A prevailing fault with our students, and indeed with experienced painters, is that of making the reflections too strong, and therefore throwing the whole work out of tone. This fault arises among students from the desire to express distinctly everything that is seen; and in the process of doing this they forget the general balance of light and shade. With painters the desire is rather to give a spurious brilliancy to their pictures at the expense of truth. It is useless, in making a study of a head, for instance, to have the proportions and features correct in outline, if in shading they are out of tone. A half-

tint too dark, or a light too bright, will destroy the unity of the work, and will cause it to present an assemblage of features, each in itself possibly right, but bearing no reference to the general roundness of the head.

Again, it is obvious that the tendons on the back of a thin hand are long and clearly-defined strings: the first impulse of the careful student is to dwell on this, to the exclusion of the much more important place they hold as subordinate to the general distribution of light and shade. Consequently, he is certain to mark them too strongly; so that the back of the hand in his drawing becomes a disconnected map of veins and tendons. The difficulty arises from the fact that he has now two matters to deal with—form and tone; the forms he knows he must represent, or it will not be a hand; but he must also, while still remembering the forms with reference to the *position* of the lights, shadows, and half-tints, forget them while thinking of their *relative values or strengths*, and in this sense consider his model not as a hand but as a study of tone; otherwise the result will be, as I have said, the map of a hand, and not the representation of one. And so in making a drawing of a whole figure. According to its position with reference to the light, it may happen that a leading muscular division may be indicated by a half-tint so faint

as to be hardly visible; observing its constructional importance, the beginner will be likely to mark it too strong, to the destruction of the unity of effect in the figure. Or again, on a plane receding from the light, the muscles may stand out in great relief of light and shade; the student will observe this strong contrast of lights and shadows in each separate muscular form, and forget that the whole plane on which they are relieved is in itself in half-tint; again to the destruction of the general roundness and unity of the figure.

There is also in connection with this subject another point to which attention must be directed. It is not only by dwelling on detail that a student may err in not giving the proper tone to his figure; the whole key of the drawing may be too dark or too light. The former is generally the fault of students who are in earnest about their work; this arises from their looking too much at the shades with reference to each other, without due reference to the surroundings; that is to say, from their paying attention only to their *relative* and not to what for convenience I may here call their *absolute*, strength in the scale of light and dark. It is very common, for instance, to see the darkest shadow in a drawing from a cast made absolutely, or very nearly, black. Now with reference to other shadows in the figure it may appear to be so, still more with reference

to the lightest parts; but let the student look at anything really black (as for instance the shadow under the sleeve of a black coat), and he will then find the real value of the shade he is representing in the scale of tones in the room where he is working. This want of reference to the surroundings is the real cause of the blackness so frequently seen in drawings; by bringing the darkest shade to its proper value in the scale from black to white, you will then have to lighten by degrees the whole of the rest of the shading to bring it into proportion, and the drawing will gradually acquire its proper tone.

The importance of the correct perception of tone has given rise in France to a system of drawing by tone merely, to the ignoring of constructive drawing; the result is that there is no school where tone (or as they call it "*les valeurs*") is better understood; the absurdities and crudities of modern English art in this respect being unknown there. At present the French devote themselves too exclusively to this side of art, and the result is that, in their seeking after its subtleties, they have almost arrived at the conclusion that one object is as good to paint as another; a female head or a piece of raw meat being looked upon as equally suitable for the exercise of their skill in painting. There is no necessity for carrying matters to this extreme; the

great Italian painters were none the less masters of tone because they devoted themselves to the study of form, and to the higher points of construction and ideal beauty. But it must be kept in mind that no amount of anatomical or constructional knowledge of drawing is of value without a true perception of tone. A figure which, as we say, is "all to pieces" in this respect, however correct the outline, will never stand the light of intelligent criticism. It is our want of perception on this point that makes foreigners laugh when they see our pictures; and with regard to most of our work of the more popular sort, the laugh is fully justified.[1]

I have thus far set forth the points a beginner has to attend to during his preliminary course of study in the antique, for there is no doubt that such a course is necessary up to a certain point, before proceeding to the study of the living model. So soon, however, as

[1] That there has been great improvement in English art in this respect within the last decade there can be no doubt. The particular garish look that was common to English exhibition-rooms is much modified of late; and French artists remarked on the great general improvement in English art in the Paris Exhibition of last year (1878) compared to what they saw of it in 1867. I was gratified to hear from a French artist of distinction an opinion which is a confirmation of my own, that our art has improved and will continue to improve, because the English take what is good from other schools without sacrificing their originality. He compared it with the art of the Belgian, Italian, and other schools, which can only imitate.

the student has acquired sufficient comprehension of the general proportions and character of the figure, he should be set to work from the life.

The great facility in drawing the human figure to be found among foreign artists, is no doubt mainly due to the fact of there being but a limited time allowed both for painting and drawing from the living model. In the six sittings of two hours each, which is the usual time allowed to French students in the Academy for their drawings from the life, drawings are done in which the utmost correctness is combined with the most exquisite finish; and what a French student can do, there is no doubt that an English student ought to do; it is a mere question of the habit of acquiring certainty and facility. If the student is allowed too much time for his work, he will easily fall into lazy and careless habits; so that this practice of early drawing from nature, and of being allowed a rigorously limited time for each study, I consider most important for the acquisition of a good style of work.

But at this point we enter on another branch of study. Hitherto the student has been able to draw his figures without more knowledge of construction or anatomy than is given for his help in the course of the teaching he receives. If he does not know as yet the position of the collar-bone in the skeleton, he can at all events see

it for himself in an antique figure, forming a ridge from the pit of the neck to the point of the shoulder; and as it is always to be found in the same place on the figure, he will find no difficulty in drawing it more or less accurately. But the case is different when he is before the living model; a slight movement of the shoulder, or a pressure on the elbow, will in certain positions cause the collar-bone to start out in strong relief, or disappear into the shoulder. In order that he may draw it with any accuracy, therefore, it is necessary that he should know its form, the part it plays in the construction of the body, where it is attached at either end, and by what muscles it is surrounded. He must therefore carry on with his study of drawing the study of anatomy, which he will do by drawing from the skeleton and anatomical casts, and attending if possible a course of anatomical lectures. Such studies as appear among the prize-drawings at South Kensington in which the student has outlined an antique figure and drawn it out as an anatomical subject, are very good at a more advanced stage. Still better would be the same process applied to drawings from the life-model, the anatomical forms in the antique being generalised and difficult to discover except by a very advanced student. It will not, however, be of much use for him to study anatomy, until he has made some progress in drawing: unless he

has some general knowledge of the aspect of the human figure which he can keep in mind while attending the lectures, he will only half take in, and probably soon forget all he hears, and the time spent in drawing anatomical studies would be better bestowed on his usual work. It is better therefore not to devote too much time to anatomy at first, as a competent instructor can give all the assistance in this respect that is needed in the earlier stages.

It must be remembered that anatomy will not teach drawing; it is only a help to the knowledge the student is seeking for, the knowledge of the human form in all its infinite varieties of action and position. I can even conceive the possibility of acquiring a knowledge of the figure, from continued practice in drawing it in all positions, without any acquaintance with anatomy. The Greek sculptors indeed are supposed by many to have worked from a knowledge of the external aspects of the figure only, the art of dissection being unknown to them. But such knowledge would seem to us to be impossible of attainment even in a life-time by the most gifted minds, while by the help of anatomy the ordinary student may gain by a short road the knowledge which would otherwise be but slowly and gradually acquired in the course of his studies. It may therefore be taken for granted that the more acquaintance with anatomy

the artist possesses, the more intimate will be his knowledge of the external aspects of the figure, and the better will he be able to draw it. There is no doubt that Michelangelo, in his later years, was able, with a very small amount of assistance from nature in the shape of preliminary studies, frequently no more than slight sketches, to draw out his grand figures and paint them in fresco, with all their difficulties of foreshortening and relief, purely from his profound knowledge of anatomy. The advantage of this of course was that the figure when painted was the complete expression of his first intention; and he could out of his supreme knowledge give to a figure whatever characteristics of beauty or sublimity he pleased, as freely as if he were its creator. If, therefore, I say that it is better not to take up this study too soon, it is only because I think the student's time may be better employed at first in acquiring knowledge of the more generally important properties of form and tone.

After the study of form and tone comes the study of colour; and the student having passed a certain time drawing in the Life-school, will be anxious to proceed to the practice of this important part of his art. My experience indeed is that students are frequently too much in a hurry in this respect: they should remember that there is a certain amount of drudgery which is

unavoidable in the earlier stages of all study, and that art makes no exception to this rule. If, as is unfortunately only too frequently the case, the study of art is taken up later in life than most others, the student must do his best to place himself in the position of a beginner, and to understand that nothing but a regular and methodical progress will be of any avail; that the ground must be gone over at whatever cost of patience; and that there is no such thing as jumping from one difficulty to another. When the student can accomplish a drawing from the life in black and white, which shall convey a just impression of the movement, proportions, and general characteristics of the model, and which at the same time shall show that he has mastered the more important points of anatomy and construction, and is able to express them in a workmanlike manner, with a due regard to those qualities of tone to which I have attached so much importance;—I think that then he may consider that he is entitled to add the difficulties of colour to those which he already has to deal with. I am aware that there is a school of artists who consider that painting cannot be taken up too soon, and that students should be taught form through the medium of colour; but these I think are of the same class as those who would teach drawing merely by the study of tone, and their system tends to lead to the same

end,—the substitution of the lower arts of imitation, for that incomparably higher art which aims at ideal beauty, and which cannot be acquired without a thorough training in sound constructional drawing. That painting should be carried on side by side with drawing from the beginning is far more intelligible, for the difficulties of oil-painting are extreme, so that one may almost say that it cannot be undertaken too young. I am to some extent of that opinion myself; only, if the student must begin to paint young, he must be still younger when he begins to draw, for he cannot carry on the two studies systematically at the same time; and, in brief, the simpler study must precede the more difficult, at the risk of neither being thoroughly learnt. Therefore until a student in the life can draw the figure well enough not to be hampered by difficulties of proportion and construction while he is painting, it will be of no advantage to him to involve himself in further difficulties: and it will be found that he will hardly have gained this necessary amount of proficiency, under two years of regular work from the time of his beginning his course as a student of art, though some may be more rapid in their progress than others. I admit, however, that whatever spare time a student has, and during the vacations, there can no harm, but rather good, result from his making studies in painting; it is only the

interruption of the regular course of work that I consider objectionable.

Now in painting, as in drawing, the just perception of tone is of the highest possible importance. The absolute colour of an object (supposing for convenience' sake that there be such a thing) is hardly ever seen in nature; it is always more or less modified by the circumstances under which it is seen. A simple example is sufficient to explain my meaning. A blue drapery, in shade, without reflection of any kind falling upon it, or light transmitted through it, will be black (which is equally true of course of any other colour). With a reflection upon it from a yellow wall it will appear green; with a reflection from a red wall it would appear purple, and so on; now all this time the drapery will be inherently blue, but to the spectator it will appear of different colours according to circumstances. The various tints that colours take under various circumstances are not by any means always so obvious as in this example; indeed they may be said to be practically infinite; but in every case it is the precise tone of these apparent colours that the painter has to discover and fix on his canvas in absolute colours, that is to say in the various tints which he has mixed together on his palette.

Now almost every painter has his pet system of painting. There are all sorts of schemes for underpainting, glazing,

scumbling, and a hundred other processes, which are calculated to give transparency to the shadows, brightness to the lights, solidity to the masses, and I know not what; —the impression apparently being that sōlidity and transparency are to be obtained by some trick of painting rather than by imitating the aspects of nature. But with all this the student has nothing to do. It appears to me obvious, that, if in making his study, he can so match on his canvas the colours and tone of the object he is painting, that an exact resemblance shall result, nothing further can be wished for; if this is achieved the object will appear solid and the shadows will appear transparent as a matter of course. The intention is so to train the student's eye that he shall be able to see, and see at once, the tones and colours of his model; and if he is always painting colours which he does not see, with a view of correcting them afterwards by glazes and other methods, what probability is there that he will even see colour truly. His only chance is by matching each tint and each gradation of tint to gain the necessary practice in *seeing* which is the all-important matter; it is his *eye* which he must educate to learn the art of painting. The right tones placed in the right places, and the work is done. That is the whole mystery of painting for a student; aided by his previous practice in drawing, the hand will certainly educate itself with the eye.

For a *student*, I said; for when he has once mastered this difficulty of seeing, and knows what nature is like, he may take what liberties with his palette he pleases; he need never go wrong: and if he thinks he can gain by processes of painting qualities of workmanship which cannot be produced by this simple means of *tone-matching* (as he no doubt can) he will not only have the liberty to use them, but what is more important, the power of doing so. To a student, however, processes are delusive; and only lead him to endeavour, as Reynolds I think has said, to begin where the great men have left off. The method I prescribe, therefore, is no method of *painting* at all, but a method of *study* or *education*; it teaches no process; and I hope no one will imagine for a moment that there is any short road to painting by means of a process.

To the beginnings of painting the same rule will apply as to the beginnings of drawing; the simplest proceeding must come first. A student having obtained admission to the painting class in his school, will begin best by painting from the cast, not doing what are called at South Kensington monochromes, which are not paintings but mere light and shade studies in oil-colours, the imitation of tone not being included; but by really endeavouring to imitate at once the exact tones of the cast. The method indeed, universal in the Government schools, of making

monochrome paintings, on a system of *not* imitating the tone of the casts, is about the most dangerous part of all their system. The practice of merely making a drawing in oil-colours, simply shuts out the one great difficulty in painting; that of keeping in mind the three great qualities of form, tone, and colour. The only method of educating the eye for colour is by teaching the student from the very first to match his tones to those of the model. The painting when placed at the side of the model should be so like it as to be startling in its truth. When the student can do this he may allow full scope to his imagination; he will be able to paint what presents itself to his mind's eye as easily as that which he sees with his bodily vision; but unless he can truly paint what he has before him he can do nothing else.

It is useless to pursue any further the career of the art-student. When he can paint reasonably well from the cast, he will proceed to work from the living-model, which will be the last stage in his course of instruction; but he must never give up continuing to draw, carrying on this study along with that of painting. The various other studies he will pursue do not come within the limits of this paper, which touches only on the points immediately connected with the study of the figure, but he will do well, indeed he will find it necessary if he aims at any high form of art, to pursue courses

of Perspective, and of Architecture; of the latter especially, as opening out fields for the imagination in the treatment of the higher classes of subject, which are closed to any one ignorant of that art. He will also carry on the study of water-colour greatly to his advantage; if he ever has the good fortune to have a painting in fresco to do, he will hardly be able to manage the material without previous practice in water-colour; unless of course he has made fresco his special study. As for the great masters of painting and sculpture, if he has any love for his art he will take a natural pleasure in constantly contemplating their works.

If I have expressed myself clearly, I shall have been understood to speak in this paper only of matters which are necessary in the education of all artists, to whatever style of figure-painting they may devote themselves. A true and correct perception of the three points of Form, Tone, and Colour will have been seen to be as necessary to the treatment of subjects of a lower as well as of a higher order. They do not any of them come under the category of things which may be neglected or not, as the artist pleases. They are the essentials, without which an artist cannot put his ideas into proper form. It is useless for an artist to put forward his poetical feeling, depth of religious

sentiment, attention to beauty of detail, earnestness of intention, or any other quality, in the place of the workmanlike power which shall enable him to place his intentions before us in an artistic form. And if it were allowable to make a choice amongst these scholastic qualities, I, for my part, should rather tolerate a fault of drawing or of perspective, or an inharmonious arrangement of colour, than a false rendering of tone. The true perception of this is, so to speak, a *constant* in the works of all the great painters: for its sake one forgives the absurdities of Correggio's drawing, and the vulgarity of Rembrandt's heads; its treatment is developed in the works of Michelangelo to an equal grandeur with that of form; while it is the whole secret of the position which Velasquez holds as the chief among realistic painters. When Turner begins to lose his perception of it, all the poetical and imaginative power, so copiously displayed in the conceptions of his subjects, does not save his pictures from being repulsive; while we have one living painter who, though he may not owe his popularity to this quality, has earned his success among artists and intelligent critics to his wonderful power, when he chooses to exert it, of seizing on its higher and more subtle truths. A true appreciation of the important part it plays in those external aspects of nature, which it is the business of

the artist to interpret, is never absent from the work of any great master; and conversely it may be said that no painter, of any time or country, can come into the list of even second-rate artists, whose pictures are deficient in this all-important quality.

LECTURE VI.[1]

ON THE STUDY OF NATURE.

In some interesting lectures on the Philosophy of the Italian Art of the Renaissance, M. Henri Taine calls attention to the immense advantage the old Italian artists enjoyed over the men of to-day, in the fact that their minds were not overburdened with ideas. Under modern conditions of life we think so much and so subtly, that our impressions of nature no longer come to us with simplicity and directness, while, according to M. Taine, a noble form of art is only possible when the images which nature stamps on our minds are not blurred or distorted by the intrusion of our ideas.

This remark is a valuable one, inasmuch as it points out one great difficulty which stands in the way of a free development of art, the difficulty, that is, of

[1] Part of an Address delivered at the St. Martin's School of Art.

securing that the study of nature shall be carried on upon right principles. For this 'study of nature' is not as simple a matter as it appears at first sight, and it is quite possible that we may pursue it in such a way as to interpose ideas and prejudices of our own between ourselves and nature, which may prevent our receiving its impressions in the form most stimulating to the artistic powers. I will endeavour to make this clearer by a practical illustration derived from the study of artistic ornament.

In this branch of art a novel idea was started some little time ago, which had for its object a new application of the forms and colours of flowers to the ornamenting of wall papers, hangings, and other materials for surface decoration. This was, that the student should take a flower or a plant, and commence by drawing it in its natural form; next, that he should dissect the plant botanically, making separate geometrical drawings, plans, and sections, of the petals, corolla, stamen, pistil, branching of the leaves from the stem, &c., that he might understand how the flowers could be treated geometrically; thirdly, that from these drawings a geometrical pattern should be made, combining artistically the forms which had been discovered during the process. Now here was an idea, a thing that had never been thought of before; so that

a step forward in a direction never before explored seemed inevitable. Yet I must express my opinion that quite the most unfortunate attempts at decorative patterns, both as regards form and colour, that I have ever seen, were some which were produced by this infallible process!

The reason is simply this, that the idea takes in the student's mind the place of the impression, he thinks the design must necessarily turn out well, for he has been taught that nature's forms are beautiful; and here are nature's forms reduced to their simplest expression and, with due deference to the exigencies of a formal design, combined in the way in which nature combines them. Unfortunately, this process of reasoning does not necessarily lead to a work of art; but merely to an ingenious combination, which may be absolutely deficient in any qualities of beauty or prettiness. Nature is not necessarily beautiful in all her forms, in spite of all that we are taught as children,—still less dissected nature. It is not every flower that is good in colour and graceful in form; and it is the business of the artist to select what is beautiful and reject what is ugly and unsuitable. Now the dissection of a flower, however ingenious the idea may seem, may indeed give the student an admirable understanding of its botanical properties, but does not necessarily lead to an appreciation

of its artistic fitness for ornament. I would not have students neglect any means of advancing themselves in the knowledge of the construction of natural growths: to know the anatomy of a flower is as useful in drawing it as to know the anatomy of the body in drawing the human figure; but unless the mind has impressed upon it by instinct or observation a distinct image of the various graces of form, and harmonious combinations of colour, which flowers and plants possess in their natural state, no amount of ideas, acquired in the way just described, will be of the least use for the production of good artistic design. Ancient art produced ornamental designs without end, of the most perfect beauty, without the necessity of bringing in any such ideas. These decorative forms were produced by a pure natural instinct, which led the ancients to combine and modify in the most beautiful manner the most beautiful natural forms. There are also abundant examples of oriental decorative work of the most ordinary kind, which are perfect in proportion, form, and colour. In such cases we can see in the first place that the beauty of certain natural forms had been impressed in the most vivid manner upon the designer's mind, and in the second, that his hand was guided by a sort of unconscious instinct when he sought to apply those beautiful forms to a decorative purpose.

In pictorial art also the same difficulty is constantly occurring: our ideas are continually getting the better of our natural impressions. The remedy is, however, the same as in the other case, and is fortunately easier of application. The highest possible forms of pictorial art have as their object the representation of the human form and face in all their varied aspects of tragic and joyful expression. There the imitation of nature is the principal object, only it is an imitation which leaves out of sight all that is weak, ungainly, or ignoble, and delights only in beauty, strength, and life, as is the case in the noble works of the Greek and Italian schools. For the student of to-day there is accordingly but one thing to aim at, and that is so to study nature as to receive and retain the most complete and distinct impressions. Once let his mind be thoroughly imbued with a true knowledge of nature, and he may use it as he pleases; if he has studied thoroughly he is not likely to go far wrong. But to do this, he must get rid of extraneous ideas, and rely on the images which are formed in his mind, and which nature constantly presents to his eyes. And here as before a practical illustration may be of service.

What I am about to refer to is a very strong and very curious instance of the way in which ideas run away with us in art, to the prejudice of what we might

naturally do if we relied on our impressions alone. It has reference to the origin twenty years ago of what was called the Pre-Raphaelite movement; and I trust that I may not be supposed in these remarks to be attempting to throw ridicule on the enthusiasm of young men, anxious to make a reform which was urgently needed, who have long ago grown out of the weaknesses which are incidental to enthusiasm, and to whom, as men of genius, we owe the utmost respect and gratitude. The instance is, however, a very apposite one. At the beginning of this movement, one of the predominant ideas was that purity is in all its forms essential to good art. Purity of subject, purity of sentiment, purity of expression, being all necessary, were only to be secured by the utmost purity of form and colour. To attain to purity of colour was a most important point, and to this end nothing but the most refined and brilliant pigments were to be used. Ochres and umbers were earthy, and perhaps therefore earthly, so the newest chemical compounds were sought out for the sake of procuring the clearest and brightest tints of green, yellow, scarlet, violet, and blue, that could be employed for the palette. These, combined in prismatic hues on the purest white, were to take the place in flesh-tints of the sober colours which artists had been content to use up to that time.

The idea was carried so far, that the use of these colours was considered as a sort of test of the earnestness of a painter in his work, and they were even invested with a sort of religious halo. Here then is a case where the idea completely out-mastered the impression, for it is certain that no painter trusting to his eyes alone would paint the shade of even the purest maiden's cheek with violet madder and emerald green, and with cadmium or orange vermilion to complete the triad of prismatic colours.

The above is perhaps an extreme instance, but the influence of the same kind of feeling may be traced in various forms through the whole range of our modern art. Sometimes it is a religious, sometimes a sentimental, sometimes a scientific idea which obtains possession of the painter's mind with the effect of deadening his true artistic perceptions. The cause may be found in the want of training common to English artists, which leads them to reject through ignorance and prejudice what practice and experience have shown to be convenient, if not necessary, modes of procedure.

LECTURE VII.[1]

VALUE OF PRIZES.

THE few words which I have to offer to you on the present occasion are concerned with the result of the recent competition for Scholarships and Prizes, and I shall endeavour in them to explain the reasons by which I have been guided in making the awards, since without a knowledge of these reasons half the value of the prizes would be lost to you.

I am aware that there are many persons who consider that the principle of prize-giving is altogether a wrong one, and who hold that the student's enthusiasm should be powerful enough to enable him to dispense with the additional stimulus of competition. Experience does not,

[1] Portion of a Lecture given at the end of the first session of the Slade School. There are a few practical hints in this lecture on various subjects connected with the ordinary school course, which made me think it worth publishing; but it will probably not be found to contain much of interest for people in general.

however, lend any force to this view. Practically speaking, it is only when the students are spurred on to their best efforts in the struggle for a prize that the teacher is enabled to judge accurately of the progress they have made; and though students may doubtless be found who work less well than usual in a competition, it is far more generally the case that they do not even themselves know what they can do until their energies are called out in this manner. Another valuable element in these competitions is, that in awarding the prize to a particular drawing, the master is able to show in a practical manner the style of work which he considers the best for a student to pursue. At the same time the successful competitors must not imagine that they have completed their education in the different departments of study because they have won prizes in them. The prizes are given, not because the student is perfect in his work, but because he is the best; and it must be remembered that there are two ways in which he may be the best—one where in a good competition he carries all before him, and another where he is only first because the rest lag behind.

With regard to the Scholarships, it is worthy of notice that the number of competitors eligible in point of age, and qualified to pass the preliminary examination in general subjects, should bear such a very small proportion to the whole number of students in the school. The

reason is probably to be found in the fact that parents as a rule cannot make up their minds to let their children study seriously as artists until the time has gone by at which they could enter for these scholarships.[1] The great majority, treating art as an elegant accomplishment to be practised in leisure hours, would doubtless prefer that their sons should make their living in some other way; the effect of which is, that by the time the inclination shown becomes too strong to be resisted, it is generally somewhat late for a student to begin his course. The fact that more than half the competitors on this occasion are ladies, points in the same direction; for as art is one of the very few professions in which women can compete with men, those who choose it as a means of livelihood will make every effort to begin early, while the far wider field open to the energies of young men tends to lessen the number of those who devote themselves from the first to art. It may, however, be hoped that parents will be induced by the liberal endowment of these scholarships to permit their sons to enter on their artistic studies at an earlier age. As it is, for the next few years the young ladies competing will no doubt be in a majority, though when the still-lingering prejudices against art as a

[1] By the terms of Mr. Slade's will, six scholarships of 50*l.* a year, tenable for three years, are open to competition among students under 19 years of age.

profession have disappeared, we may hope to see an equal number of competitors from each sex.

To pass on to the subject of Prize drawings. It must be understood that the prize is necessarily awarded in every case to the work which is the best done, and does not depend upon the mere amount of pains the student may have taken, though it may be laid down as a general rule that the hardest worker gets in first at the end. With regard to the prize for drawing from the life, the only possible principle is to bestow it on the figure which is best in point of drawing—best, that is, in outline, and in the expression it gives to the character of the model—execution or workmanship being necessarily put in the second place. The important points to be considered are the general action and proportion of the figure, the position of the joints and setting on of the head, limbs, and extremities, the correctness of the outline, and the elegance of the form, while an exact resemblance to the face of the model should always be aimed at. Excellence in these matters is difficult of attainment and requires the most painstaking study, while the execution of the drawing is a mere question of practice, and comes of itself if the other points are carefully attended to.

In connection with this subject, students cannot be too constantly warned against attempting to give a specious appearance of prettiness to their work by an easily-acquired

knack of execution. The words of Sir Joshua Reynolds on this point are well worthy of quotation, and I may take the opportunity of recommending his *Discourses on Art* to those who are not already acquainted with them, containing as they do the very best precepts that are to be found for the guidance of the learner. His Discourses are indeed a mine of pithy and apposite phrases, each of which might serve as the text for a lecture. Upon this matter he says :—"A lively, and what is called a masterly, handling of the chalk or pencil, are, it must be confessed, captivating qualities to young minds, and become of course the objects of their ambition. They endeavour to imitate these dazzling excellencies, which they will find no great labour in attaining. After much time spent in these frivolous pursuits, the difficulty will be to retreat; but it will then be too late, and there is scarce an instance of return to scrupulous labour after the mind has been debauched and deceived by this fallacious mastery." Reynolds says again, a little further on :—"A student is not always advancing because he is employed; he must apply his strength to the part of art where the real difficulties lie." And again :—"The students, instead of vying with each other which shall have the readiest hand, should be taught to contend who shall have the purest and most correct outline." The application of these remarks will be clear; but a word of warning is

necessary on the other side, lest it should be supposed that because more stress is laid on general correctness than on finished execution, you are therefore exempted from bestowing care upon the latter point. It must be remembered that attention to detail, although it comes after attention to general form, is not on that account of secondary importance. It is the tendency to make it take the place of the other unduly that must be guarded against.

In the case of the prize for painting, the same general considerations hold good. The figure must not only be well painted, but must be well drawn, though excellence in painting is obviously the quality to which most weight must be given. With respect to the painting and drawing of details, which are not always easily seen at the distance you require for taking in the whole figure, you must adopt the habit of going close up to the model to gain a nearer view of them. Inability to see often means want of knowledge, while forms that you understand you can generally see. Nothing is more objectionable than the use of opera glasses under these circumstances. Those who are short sighted had better wear spectacles; an opera glass isolates the details and throws them out of their true proportion, thus confirming the dangerous tendency to sacrifice unity to the elaboration of unimportant parts, against which I have often warned you.

There remain for notice the prize compositions, the subject for which is the wrestling of Jacob with the Angel, as described in these words: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh: And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." In judging these, as none of the students are as yet very advanced in the technical parts of their art, the drawing of the figures must be put as far as possible out of the question, and the award depend upon which sketch tells the story best, and presents the most agreeable form of composition.

Now in the treatment of this subject there are two points that might be taken,—one, the act of wrestling; the other, the determination of Jacob not to let the Angel go, although disabled in the way described in the text. Of these two points I think that those who have chosen the latter have shewn the most originality of idea, and the best appreciation of the meaning of the subject, since it affords more opportunity for expression than the mere act of wrestling. This however is quite capable of being treated in a very noble and dignified manner. Supposing it were chosen, the first

thing necessary would be to make it something more than a mere wrestling match. At the outset you must invest both figures with a certain dignity suited to the Scriptural and legendary nature of the story. Both in his face and figure you must shew that Jacob is no ordinary mortal. You must give him the grandeur and dignity of the patriarch of the chosen people, with the strength that should fit him to undertake a combat with a being of superhuman attributes; while in the figure of the Angel you must combine with the effort of the struggle, a look of ease and conscious superiority in the face, and a simpler majesty and beauty of form. In the figure of Jacob the effort should be more painful; while the effect of the exertion should be more apparent on a wiry and muscular frame, suited to a simple and patriarchal personage. In this way Jacob and the Angel might be distinguished from one another at a glance without the addition of wings or a halo to the Angel.

For a wonderful expression of ease combined with effort, I may call attention to a group in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, where an angel and a demon are disputing the possession of a soul rising from the earth; the demon is exerting his utmost strength in pulling the figure downwards, while the angel soars upwards with a calm dignity and an appearance of

conscious and irresistible might which makes a sublime contrast with the ignominious exertions of the other.

The landscape in this, as in every other subject of an exalted kind, should be of the simplest possible nature, so as not to interfere in any way with the interest of the figures. To make the composition a landscape in which the figures only take a secondary place, is quite out of character with the dignity of the subject; which demands that our attention should be occupied as much by the figures as possible, the surroundings being only sufficient to add to the impressiveness of the scene and give such local character as may be deemed necessary.

In considering the second point which might be taken in this story, the detention of the Angel by Jacob until he has blessed him, the general treatment of the figures must be the same as in the former case, but the struggle of Jacob should be that of a disabled man, and what will be required will be rather a kind of desperate clinging on his part; and as a certain reluctance on the part of the Angel is implied in the text it will be necessary to convey this impression in the action of his figure.

Next to the treatment of the subject, comes the equally important point of the composition of the group. Lionardo da Vinci goes so far as to say that "the principal part of painting lies in the art of making happy

compositions. The expression is the next part in dignity, and consists in giving each figure the necessary attention to what it is doing." This is doubtless in one sense right, for the picture is not a picture at all unless well composed; if it consists merely in the rendering of an action, it will be no better than a photograph of a good actor might be; but at the same time it must be borne in mind that a composition, which is agreeable in lines, but in which the figures are deficient in action, or the action not in accordance with nature, is mere emptiness, and signifies nothing, however skilful may have been the designer.

In this as in all compositions it will be necessary to pay particular attention to the draperies, both as to costume and arrangement. It would be possible, no doubt, to treat it with nude figures only, but it would require a Michelangelo to do it; the superhuman nature of the Angel would then be expressed by his superior beauty of face and form alone; but the experiment would be dangerous for more ordinary mortals, and failure would involve so ignominious and undignified a presentation of a noble theme that I should not advise a student to make the attempt. A much easier method of conveying the contrast between the two figures may be found by clothing them in draperies of different character. That of the Angel, for instance, may be the conventional flowing dress, girt up for the convenience of

the strife; while the dress of Jacob may very well consist of such a sheepskin coat and rough thick mantle as a shepherd would wear. Special costume, indeed, it is not advisable to introduce; rather, it is most desirable to avoid; anything at all approaching the dress of the modern Bedouin Arab would be fatal, even if correct, as immediately associating the actors in the scene with the commonplaces of modern Oriental life, and so destroying the dignified and exalted impressions which we always associate with the Biblical narrative. But any arrangement which should suggest a generic type of the primitive shepherd's dress would be correct. It would be appropriate to make Jacob wrestling in his under-garment, having cast his mantle to the ground; and in this case the mantle might usefully assist the lines and masses of the composition by being the means of connecting the group together. The great and important use of drapery in a composition is, not merely to serve as a covering to the limbs, or to give character through costume, but to add dignity or grace to the figures, to assist their movement by the direction of its folds, and to knit together by broad masses or leading lines the various parts of the composition; and in the colouring of a picture it is of course invaluable. Viewed in this light it is perhaps the most difficult part of a picture, and that which requires the most knowledge and study.

It would be of great advantage to the students if the sketches submitted in this competition were now taken up to be carried further, and after having been corrected and improved in composition, in accordance with my remarks, were worked out from nature. Studies of the action of the figures should be made from models, and persevered in till the required action is obtained. Where necessary two models should be used together. Then must follow separate studies of the hands, feet, heads, and draperies; of wings, if the angel is to be represented with wings, and of any other accessories that may be required in the picture. Finally, a carefully finished cartoon should be made in chalk or charcoal, with the figures about twenty inches or two feet high. Those to whom models are inaccessible must, when they have fully made up their minds as to the action of their figures, have recourse to prints, antique statues, and the like, for assistance in the matter of drawing. Aids of this kind should not of course be looked to for the suggestion of ideas, but should merely serve as substitutes for models.

I have here given you nothing more than hints as to how such a subject as you have for competition may be treated. A man of genius might no doubt defy any of the rules for composition here suggested, and produce a work of great and original merit. But if you proceed

on these lines you will be safer than by trusting to your own unaided original gifts, and by working out your design in this way you will have gained a most important step in preparing yourself for the painting of pictures later on in your career.

LECTURE VIII.[1]

OBJECTS OF STUDY.

In the few general remarks with which I prefaced the consideration of the prize-drawings at the close of last Session, I signified my intention of developing into the form of a more elaborated lecture the hints I then threw out on the objects in study in art. But a lecturer who is obliged to be frequently before an audience, whether of professed students or an interested public, labours under the disadvantages belonging to a limited theme, that his endeavours to impress on them his views on the theory and practice of art must result in a certain amount of repetition, and consequently of monotony. For the subject *is* of a limited nature, and it is not easy to find anything to say which is not already to a certain extent familiar to the listener, either as derived from previous study or experience, or as the result of his own unaided reflection.

[1] Given at the opening of the fourth Session of the Slade School.

In other subjects there is generally some matter sufficiently new to require explanation, discussion or refutation. The discoveries of Science are inexhaustible; there is always something fresh to tell of, or some new theory being founded on the basis of old discoveries. A scientific point moreover has the merit of being more or less demonstrable; if different opinions are held upon it, arguments of an interesting and easily appreciable nature can be brought to bear on the discussion, and until the demonstration is complete the interest is ever new. But the lecturer on art has no such means of interesting his hearers; to express myself perhaps paradoxically, a person must be interested in art to be interested in a lecture on art;—an argument, though it may be backed up by the highest authority, can never be more than the expression of a private opinion; at least, it will remain so until philosophers have developed the modern theory, that there is a discoverable and certain basis for criticism in matters of beauty and therefore of art, and that a sufficient study of the subject will make the relative values of various styles a matter of certain calculation.

The lecture I read to you at the beginning of last Session I devoted to the consideration of *methods* of study; and I pointed out the successive stages to be gone over in the course of a system of instruction, dwelling particularly

on the necessity of a systematic and workmanlike execution, and explaining that attention to the important general truths of form, tone, and colour, must be accompanied by careful finish and study of detail, and that it is of the utmost importance that the work should be done without more than the needful amount of time being spent upon it. These are the points I more particularly insisted on, and in considering the *Objects* of Study I give the reasons for the recommendations I then made, and their importance will I hope become apparent. In arranging a system of Instruction, we have to bear in mind not only the best means by which that system may be impressed on the mind of the learner, but its fitness for the end in view; that is, for such a development of his natural gifts, as will give him the free and complete use of them, as well as such a habit of good work that the carrying out of his ideas shall be in no way hampered by difficulties of execution. The power of freely exercising the faculties rather than special training for a particular style, is a prominent matter for consideration in arranging such a system. The placing of good examples before students is nevertheless an important part of any plan of study; thus it is necessary constantly to urge them to the contemplation and imitation of great masters of past times, by which they may learn the possibilities of the art they are preparing for, and endeavour to emulate them in their own practice. These,

therefore, are the two principal objects of study, the development of the faculties, and the cultivation of taste, and they must be considered together in treating of the subject in detail. The future career of the student being undoubtedly determined not only by the course of study pursued, but by the opinions expressed by his professors as to the form which his efforts should take in the end, it becomes a matter of necessity not only to speak of and place before him the best method of study and the highest examples for his imitation; it is important also to direct his attention to the bad results of a bad method or incomplete course of study, and to the limits which he imposes on himself by aiming short of what his talents and capabilities will admit; and as he is incited to emulate, or at least to appreciate, the incomparable achievements of the great artists of antiquity or the Renaissance, by having pointed out to him the beauties they contain, so it would be an easy task to set before him certain works as a warning against the indifference to study and to the higher aims of art, which is too prevalent at the present time. This, however, in a public place is forbidden ground; in such circumstances we must follow an excellent rule of the Royal Academy, which forbids the lecturer to make any comments or criticisms on the productions or opinions of living artists in this country. Such remarks would doubtless give a most pointed interest to a lecture on

Art, but it would be at the risk of unjustly wounding susceptibilities; it is necessary therefore to make all criticisms on the work of the present day as general as possible, and even then it is hard to veil references, if not to particular persons, at least to particular schools of art. It is nevertheless impossible for me, as perhaps I need hardly say, to sympathise with either the aims or the productions of the large majority of modern artists. I recognise a certain small number of eminent men among us who are artists in the true sense, but whom it would be invidious to name; beyond this I recognise a few younger painters whose aims are such as artists should be, with a strong feeling for the sentiment of beauty, but who are hampered in every direction by want of a proper and complete education; beyond that is a vast majority whom I can hardly consent to call artists; not, it must be clearly understood, because they do not treat the kind of subject which I personally prefer or admire, but because they fall short on their own ground in those qualities which are essential to the making of a work of art, however unimportant the subject. And this last remark will give you the key to all the opinions I hold on the objects of a system of Instruction. To train a student, whatever his ultimate career is to be, for the highest forms of art is the one end I keep in view. Thus the subjects I give out for practice in composition are always

drawn from Biblical or classical sources, or are of a kind which require treatment of a classical nature—*i.e.*, they require the introduction of nude or classically-draped figures; not because I think that no subjects of another nature should be treated; if I thought that I should be illogical in admiring much that gives me pleasure; but because I consider that practice in that form of art, demanding as it does the highest sense of beauty, and involving the greatest difficulties in drawing and design, is the best preparation for any style which the student's natural tendencies will lead him ultimately to adopt.

Again, the study of the nude figure holds a principal, indeed an almost exclusive, place in this School on the same grounds; to draw the nude figure well will enable the artist to draw anything which does not require special technical teaching. A youth desirous of becoming a landscape painter cannot do better than study the drawing, painting, and composition of figures; it will give him a power of drawing to be acquired in no other way, besides cultivating his taste, his style, and his feeling for beauty of arrangement. The mere introduction which it gives him to the works of the great figure painters will be suggestive of a higher order of landscape than that which is gained by the trivial and photographic studies of nature which pass for pictures among the younger school of landscape painters. It will suggest to his mind the perception that

there is in landscape as in figure painting such a thing as abstract form. That trees and rocks have as it were bones and sinews, which underlie what is apparent to the superficial observer, and that neither the tricks of broad effect to be gained under the usual water-colour routine, nor the elaborate but trivial studies of surface or of construction which grew up in opposition, and as it were as an antidote to the clever but mannered dexterity of a corrupt school of landscape painting, will be sufficient for the production of a real work of art; he must understand and see in nature the great leading forms and masses of tone and colour on which was formed the style of Claude, Poussin, Wilson, Turner, and others. It is the tradition of their works which is faintly reflected in the mannered and dexterous style to which I have just referred, and to their broad perceptions of nature the other or photographic style should serve but as preliminary study. A proper course of study in a school of figure painting should lead above all things to the conviction that though detail must be known, understood, and expressed, it must be kept subordinated, so as not to force itself unduly on the eye. This knowledge it is my constant endeavour to impress on my students, and it is as important for the landscape as for the figure painter; but it must not be done by the *ignoring*, but by the *proper expression* of detail; the first is easy enough, and is but too commonly

practised. I do not pretend that the great painters named above went through such a course of figure study as I should propose; but they were men of great genius, and both instinct, tradition, and cultivation led them to see nature in a grand and magnificent manner. And as an illustration of my meaning on this last point, I cannot do better than draw attention to Turner's great picture of the *Garden of the Hesperides* in the National Gallery. Thinking this, as I do, the finest design of a landscape he ever made, I am of opinion that it is worth study as an illustration of that higher truth which is gained through the intimate knowledge of nature, a knowledge which having all by heart, pushes aside everything which is worthless and not subservient to the end in view. Moreover, it is entirely free from the manner acquired from Claude and Wilson, a manner on which, it is true, he invariably grafted something so poetical and imaginative as always to make the work his own; but I mean that their influence is to be traced only in the great breadth and massiveness of the composition, and not as having suggested the idea or arrangement. The originality in the conception of the great mass of rock pushed out into the middle of the valley, and which is the key-stone of the picture, is only equalled by the surprising truth of its drawing and the luminous sunlight in its colour. Here indeed you will see what I have called the very bones

of the rock; trivialities of detail are lost in the bold treatment of its contorted mass and in the granite hardness given to its surface, but are suggested in wonderful gradations of colour; and you will further observe the simple but beautiful arrangement of the cloud, reduced to its simplest expression in form, but admirable in its gradation of light and shade and warm reflection. All combines to place this picture on the highest level as a work of poetry and of art: the mysterious gloom of the distant ravine; the dragon, his breath mingling with the clouds, and hardly distinguishable at first from the rock on which he lies; the opening into the valley on the right (doing more for the poetry of the picture in the glimpse it gives us of its sunlit and smiling depths than a less reticent treatment could possibly have done); the bold opposing mass of trees in the centre; the agreeable disposition of the figures in the foreground by the deep and tranquil stream, combining and contrasting harmoniously with the few valuable straight lines of the fragments of architecture; the clearness of the blue sky with the bright peaks high up cutting sharply against it; the exact balance of form and colour, and light and shade; the qualities of painting, the certainty, richness and fulness of the brushwork — all these, I say, combine to place it in my mind as one of the great original pictures of the world. A certain blackness in

the foreground alone is a remnant of his early mannerism, but this is a point which need not occupy us, as I am not criticising, but only pointing out beauties. Indeed to make a comparative criticism of Turner or any other painter or their works is not my intention at present, only to draw your attention to the capabilities of landscape when used as a field on which to exercise the imagination; such work as this is truer to nature, more really and profoundly true, than the most admirably-executed fac-similes of localities. Such art as this is dead now; studies are made from nature, not as a means for supplying the mind with material, but as an end. And as I see that the best landscape painters of to-day are to be found among the figure painters, and as I know that the drawing of the figure is the best preparation for all other drawing, for these and for the other reasons I have given, I am convinced that even a student who intends to devote himself to landscape pure and simple, can best cultivate both technical and imaginative faculties by the study of the figure. I need hardly add, though for fear of being misunderstood it may be better to do so, that I have no intention of excluding from the range of the landscape painter's education the necessary amount of careful and painstaking study of forms and colour from nature itself; obviously it is essential. I have not unfrequently been asked whether landscape painting is taught in this school, and why it might not

be added as a separate course of instruction. My answer is, that there is no such thing as teaching landscape painting; I cannot consent to consider it a separate art; teach a student to draw and paint, and he will paint landscape or figures according as his inclination to one or the other dictates. My object in drawing your attention to this subject is to point out that the attainment of those qualities which I have described as being necessary to a landscape painter, that power of subordination of detail, that power of reticence arising from the knowledge of what is worthless and so to be rejected, of what is important and so to be retained as valuable, is the very foundation of all art, and is one of the most important ends to which study is to be directed. It is what gives value to such humble efforts as the study of still-life subjects, and raises them—as in the works of the French painters, Chardin especially, and of some of the Dutch painters—above the level of mere mechanical imitations, and transforms them into works capable of giving us real pleasure. I dwell, and have dwelt, always on these particular qualities, as the tendency at this time and in this country is precisely in the opposite direction, towards giving detail for the sake of detail; towards a delight in the trivialities of nature, which, charming in themselves, are only charming in a picture when kept in their proper place; and I dwell on them because no other

qualities will make up for the want of them, and no work of any kind or style can be great without them; but in considering the objects of study we have other matters hardly less important to keep in mind. In placing the study of the figure, as I do, as an essential preparation for the painter's art of whatever style, I must not lose sight of the fact that the painting of the figure, nude or draped, in all its infinite varieties of expression, either in action or in repose, is after all the highest form which that art can take. The human face and form remain the most beautiful of created things, and the most worthy of our study. What is it to us that we are told that classical subjects and nude figures have nothing to do with us at the present day? It is not Greeks or Romans we wish specially to paint, it is humanity in the form which gives us the best opportunity of displaying its beauty. One would think, if we listened to prevalent opinions on this subject, that we have no bodies, more or less beautiful, under our clothes. I would almost give as a reason for painting subjects that involve the treatment of the nude figure, the one fact which is put forward as an argument against them, that we never see the nude figure now. Be this as it may, it is not that the treatment of a modern subject is incapable of beauty or interest; what we have to consider is that subjects called classical are capable of a much higher beauty. That indefinable essence which we call the artistic gift can

doubtless invest with beauty the humblest subject, and where it exists, although we may find want of ambition, we shall never find vulgarity; but when cultivated to appreciate the higher forms of beauty, it will hardly condescend to return to treat of lower matters. The outcry indeed for the modernising of art merely means that it should be brought down to the level of ignorant people, and there is no difficulty in finding a sufficient supply of what is suited to their taste. To discuss this subject would, however, be irrelevant at the present time, and lead me from my argument. Although, then, I say that the object of studying the figure is so to cultivate the natural gifts of the painter as to fit him for his future career whatever direction it may take; though I say that every artist should so study as to enable him to treat the highest class of subjects, so that when he has acquired this power, he may choose those themes for treatment to which his natural tastes and instincts may guide him, I say also that there is a higher object in view, which is the cultivation of his *taste* for these higher forms of art. It is the absence of knowledge, and therefore of the power of choice, which limits the development of the artist's talents and leads to so much that is vulgar and commonplace in our modern schools of painting.

Doubtless the first object to which the student has to apply himself is to gain accuracy—accuracy of hand and

eye. He must in fact have the power of drawing correctly what he has before him. Superficially one would say that that is all he has to learn, that if he can draw accurately he may be said to draw well, and if we take accuracy in its most extended sense, that is not far from the truth; but in its most extended sense one may say that no one ever learns to draw accurately; taken in the ordinary sense, that the drawing shall be neat, and show no faults, although an absolute necessity in drawing, it does not go very far. A drawing though accurate enough may show no feeling for the character of the figure—that is to say, the accuracy may be merely mechanical. This kind of correctness may be gained at the cost of a great and unnecessary expenditure of time; constant correction of an inaccurate beginning may get a drawing right in the end, and in order to train the eye to be accurate, these corrections doubtless have to be made. It is far from sufficient, however, that a student should be able to get his drawing right in the end; unless he acquires the habit of getting it right at once, his accuracy will be of little use to him; it is certainty and celerity that he has to aim at; he can never seize the character of his subject without this habit of certainty, however long a time he may spend over his work; and unless he combines celerity with certainty, how is he to catch the passing movement, or the passing effect? I have no intention now of going again into the question of

the customary art training of students in this country; I have given my opinion on this point frequently, both here and elsewhere, and it is by this time a stale subject; it will be sufficient, if my view of the results of this training be accurate, to show how deeply it affects the art of the country. If, as I am sure is the case, the results are to make the student content to attain no more than a tolerable amount of accuracy in the long run, without his ever acquiring the habit of drawing quickly, and with certainty, the tameness of our art productions is easily accounted for. To repeat again my reasons for allowing a limited time for studies from the living model in these schools would be wearisome. I may put them concisely by saying that it is with a view to the students acquiring these two qualities of swiftness and certainty. But for this purpose I must have the co-operation of the students themselves. The student who is not possessed with the necessary enthusiasm for his work will merely make the limit of time an excuse for not finishing his study, or doing it carelessly. A master I had in Paris never allowed his pupils to rub out. I think it possible to carry this system too far; it is apt to discourage the student, and may possibly lead to the dangerous habit of leaving beginnings unfinished, but the principle is right. All work should be done with a view to its being final; the touch or the line put on should be intended to remain. This is why I view with

disfavour the use of the ink-eraser in drawing; the knowledge that any mistake made can be corrected, or any amount of careless work cleaned up has a great tendency to produce not only a slovenly execution, but the want of that directness which is the essential element of a fine style in drawing.[1] Drawing, indeed, requires the constant and unwearying exercise of the mental faculties of comparison and memory. Without this it becomes a mere mechanical proceeding, and useless for any ulterior purpose. But we have another end to look to in the study of the figure, not less important to the ultimate results of a student's career, than those already mentioned; that is, the knowledge of the figure and the habit of drawing it. A knowledge of the figure, I mean, which is independent of the knowledge of the construction of the figure to be acquired through anatomical study; what we may rather call the *habit* of drawing the figure, which is only acquired by constant practice in drawing it. We wish the hand to fall to a certain extent mechanically, and of its own will into the representation of the human form. The importance of this habit, and the hold it acquires

[1] The modern tendency towards loading water-colour drawings with white in order to conceal or correct bad work has precisely the same effect. Compare, for instance, the disagreeable quality in the undoubtedly clever work of the late Mr. Pinwell and his followers, with the beautifully luminous and simple effect produced by the direct work of our best early water-colour artists.

upon the hand and the mind is seen at once in the attempt to draw a figure in an unaccustomed position or view; it requires a fresh mental effort, and my own experience shows me that the first attempt is rarely successful. The consideration of this point indeed supplies a fresh argument in favour of constant study from the living model, as against drawing too much from the antique. The ancient statues that remain to us are so few that the student cannot acquire through the study of them that familiarity with the various positions of the figure which is essential to facility in drawing it; for we must remember that that is the object to be kept in view—facility, through constant practice, in drawing the figure in whatever position. I do not consider that it is so much the difficulties inherent in fore-shortening that make an unfamiliar position harder to draw; it is more the want of habit. One of the objects of study in the Life-school is therefore to familiarise the student with as many positions of the figure as can be given under the circumstances. In a life-school, where the model has to sit for a length of time in one position, the varieties of pose are, however, necessarily limited; but within the range of what a model can keep there is variety enough; certain fore-shortenings therefore become familiar, such as the fore-shortening of the thighs in a sitting position, and of the upper and fore-arm in various actions, also some fore-shortenings of the back and front of the torso,

and the fact that a practised student generally renders these as well as the ordinary full and profile views of the body or limbs, makes me hold this opinion that it is not so much the fore-shortening that is difficult as the drawing of the body in an unaccustomed position. The habit, therefore, of drawing the figure in a great number of positions as varied as possible is one of the advantages to be gained in a lengthened course of study from the life, though a complete knowledge of the figure is only to be gained in the study of a life-time.

We have come then to this point, that the object of studying the figure is to be able to draw it with facility in whatever position we require for our purpose; but supposing our subject demands the figure in such a position that no model can keep it for more than a few minutes together, how can we possibly execute our intention unless we have acquired that habit of the figure which comes from knowledge of its various aspects, backed up by that certainty and swiftness in seizing with accuracy on the characteristics of the movement which I have put forward as the principal objects of the technical part of a student's education? This being established, it is not hard to understand the reason of the tame and wearisome choice of subjects which inundate our exhibition walls, or the monotonous repetition of the same ideas. If an artist has not this command of his powers

in respect of drawing the figure—and I do not see how with the limited education or ambition that most students allow themselves they can be in possession of it—it is obvious that his subject must be chosen with a view to what the model or the lay-figure can give him with the least effort on his own part to represent it. I must not be understood to require that all subjects should treat of violent scenes and actions, but I do require that a figure should be made to *live;* it is to represent the life that is in us that should be the highest aim of the painter. In the treatment of modern or mediæval or classic subjects this quality is alike necessary; in the slightest movement of a figure a fold of a dress changes its position; a movement through the air giving grace and undulation to its folds, which must be observed in passing, the momentary turn of a head, which cannot be retained in its freshness by a model, these are what give life to a figure, and must be arrested or they will be lost, and the picture will be dead. Look through the whole range of the works of the great masters, you will find the representation of life and movement as the one great characteristic which runs through them all; look round the walls of our exhibitions, and how many pictures will you find in which the action of the figures goes beyond that of the lay-figure? A small percentage contributed by some half-

dozen artists whose soul is really in their art. If you want to see this characteristic in its perfection, look at this copy of Raphael's *Incendio*,[1] and see the movement and the life and the nature that runs through it. I care not for the mannerism that is complained of in the somewhat cumbrous drawing of the limbs, which became a characteristic of Raphael's later work. The grand figure of the woman with the water-pot who is stalking through the gate to assist in extinguishing the flames is so alive you may almost hear her shout, and her drapery seems absolutely moving; the half-dressed woman dragging her petticoats behind her, the children, the group of frightened women in the centre, the man dropping from the wall, the son carrying his father on his back, are all instinct with life; the intention of every movement is unmistakable at the first glance. We have no right with our puny efforts to criticise such a work;[2]

[1] A full-sized copy of the *Incendio del Borgo*, which hangs in the Life-School at University College.

[2] With regard to the front of the house being open, or rather removed, as in a scene on the stage, which superficial observers always seize hold of as a fault, it is obvious enough that Raphael might have closed it if he pleased, and that he did not so treat it without consideration. The wall over which the man is climbing must be considered as the *symbol* of the wall of a house, a perfectly legitimate artifice in a work, meant, as I have explained, to be typical and decorative. The intention, clearly, is to introduce an additional element of interest by showing the interior of the house in flames, from which the man is escaping.

compared to our modern achievements it is the work of a giant. Nor is there any reason to suppose that its great author had more than a mortal allowance of genius; he leans on the support of a greater man than himself, and without inspiration from him he would in all probability have never acquired his highest style. His first works are comparatively feeble, far different from those of Michelangelo, the Titan who, in Fuseli's words, "as an artist had no infancy." This picture is therefore an admirable instance of what may be acquired by a continuous and determined study of the figure: something of what is here achieved is open to us all—something of it, I say, guardedly—I mean that portion of it which consists in the just representation of living action. The grace and beauty of design, and that ineffable charm of figure and face which characterise Raphael's works above those of all men, these are inherent in the genius of the artist, and unless we possess them, we may strive for them in vain. We may imitate them, but we cannot equal them; but some of what he acquired by mere force of study we also ought to be able to gain. A case in point, or special instance of the necessity for that directness of work on which I have laid the great stress in this paper, is afforded by the group I have alluded to of the son carrying away his father from the burning house, a group beautifully suggested by Virgil's account

of Æneas saving his father Anchises from the flames of Troy. The study for this group remains to us, and I have acquired the photograph of it, as well as of the figure of the woman on the right, for our library. It is not to be supposed that the models which sat for this study could have held their position for long together; it is no trifling matter for one man to hold another full-grown one on his back and remain still, nor do two models sitting together ever remain long in position, or find it again when it is once lost; but you will see that, in spite of these difficulties, the directness and boldness of this drawing is only equalled by its finish and accuracy. There is no hesitation about it; no jotting down of notes at the side of variation in the position; the whole is complete—heads, hands, and feet equally studied—and everywhere the important points dwelt on. Winckelman's remark that "Raphael's hand was prompt to execute the conceptions of his imagination," pithily expresses this faculty; nay, more, it suggests this further extension of the powers of drawing, that the hand that has gained the power of expressing swiftly and with certainty the object that is before the eye, gains also the power of expressing what exists only in the mind's eye—I mean the promptings of the invention and imagination.

I must, however, here, in as few words as possible,

guard a point which arises in the discussion of this subject. There is a fear of my being misunderstood to mean, that to be able to sketch well and rapidly is the faculty whose value I wish to impress on you. Facility of sketching, as it is generally understood, is far from expressing the power of drawing I mean. Many people have it by nature. What I wish to point out in such drawings as the one I have referred you to is the amazing accuracy and finish of the work; they have evidently been used as studies to paint from without the necessity for any further studies of detail. I have not had the opportunity of comparing the drawing I have spoken of above with the group in the picture, as I have only within the last few days seen it and obtained it for the Library, but I have no doubt it will be found to correspond closely to the picture, and to have had no further alteration made in it than the addition of a certain fulness and roundness in the limbs; that subordination of detail being also kept in mind which I impressed on you as the characteristic of all great works, and which is here necessary to elevate the group from a study of individual peculiarities to its place as a type required by the elevated nature of the subject. For in criticising a work of this kind, or all monumental work, it must be remembered that we are looking not at a mere accidental representation of a

fact, but at a typical representation. The figures and incidents are each of a representative kind, and are as far as possible selected so as to produce the utmost amount of effect. The individual peculiarities of the model, therefore, would be of no value, and would distract from the attention to be devoted to the monumental nature of the work. But the expression of the incident must be caught from nature, and it is this that requires the power of seizing the characteristic points. There is a drawing, however, not of Raphael's, but of Michel-angelo's, which I have been able to compare with the original. I know nothing more remarkable than the exactness with which the study for the drapery of the *Libyan Sibyl* is reproduced in the fresco on the ceiling. At first sight it may not appear remarkable that Michel-angelo should have been able to copy exactly a study of drapery of his own doing. But we must look at the matter in another way. It is not the copying of the study which is difficult, it is making the study for such an action so perfectly and absolutely true and correct that it requires no alteration. I have compared studies of drapery by Raphael with the pictures, and have always found that some alteration has been made, either towards conventionalising the forms, or to make them suit more accurately to the movement of the figure. The fact is, that to make a study of drapery involves a double diffi-

culty; it must be correct in itself, and the form beneath must be expressed correctly. When a figure is represented in an attitude of repose this is a comparatively simple matter, but the moment that action is introduced the difficulty becomes very great. The mere facility of sketching which comes by nature will obviously be of no use to the artist here. Nothing will help him but the certainty of eye and knowledge of form, which comes through practice.

If, then, I have explained myself clearly, my meaning will by this time be understood when I say that the object of the study of the figure is, by acquiring the habit of drawing accurately, swiftly, and with certainty its various aspects and characteristics, to give the widest possible scope to the artist's powers; and that without this habit, although a natural taste may enable him to give charm and grace to his subjects, his efforts cannot but be limited to a lower order of art, and a monotonous repetition of ideas. These habits will give the wings to the artist's imagination, without which there is no sustained flight. Unless, however, the genius of the artist be such that he can, like Michelangelo, dispense with the accessories to his pictures, and make the interest depend on the figures alone, there are other objects of study which have to be taken into consideration. His pictures will be empty of interest, not by choice, but from want of range in his ideas. The

modern popular conception of an artist indeed, seems not to require much more than that he should be able to ring the changes on some one limited theme. Thus we have some artists who devote their lives to birds' nests, others take a fancy to rustic subjects, another is celebrated for his moonlight scenes, others make a fortune out of sunsets, and so on; and that, not because a special genius impels them in those directions, but because they consent to the opinion of the public, that it is sufficient to have a trick of doing one thing passably well. It is worth while to compare these aspirations with the idea of an artist of the Middle Ages and Renaissance in Italy, when he was frequently not only painter, but sculptor and architect, and not seldom more besides. We need not do more than refer to the great names of Lionardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo; with Lionardo, the most universal genius the world ever saw, painting, which he brought to an inconceivable perfection, was only one of many pursuits; indeed, he may be said to have been rather an engineer who painted, than a painter by profession, to say nothing of the other arts he practised. Raphael, who was a painter, was architect of St. Peter's for many years after the death of Bramante, and to a limited extent he practised sculpture; Michelangelo is well known in his fourfold character of painter, sculptor, architect, and poet. But we find also that Giotto, who revived

the art of painting, was equally great as an architect; the Campanile he built for the Cathedral of Florence is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world, and Vasari tells us of other works executed by him. Orgagna, whose frescoes in the Campo Santa at Pisa and in other places place him on the highest level as a painter, both as architect and sculptor, has left two of the most beautiful works in Florence, the Loggia de' Lanzi, and the Tabernacle in the church of Orsammichele. Andrea Verocchio, the master of Lionardo da Vinci, is announced by Vasari as goldsmith, master in perspective, sculptor, carver in wood, painter, and musician; he ceased, however, to paint on recognising the extraordinary powers of his pupil, and though Vasari says that he had a somewhat hard and crude manner in sculpture, the famous statue of Bartolommeo Colleoni at Venice, would seem to give the lie to this opinion, for in life and energy, as well as in workmanship, it may be said to be unsurpassed.

The list of those artists who combined two or three arts might be greatly extended, but a brief notice of one of the great men of that period, whose powers appear to me particularly enviable, will give a better notion of the nature of an Italian artist of the Renaissance than any list of names. Baldassare Peruzzi, appears to have been exceptionally gifted among even the artists of those times;

a contemporary of Raphael, born two years earlier, and outliving him by sixteen years, he never rose to so high a position; it is his life even more than the greatness or variety of his gifts which one is inclined to envy. Brought up at his own wish as a painter at Siena, he soon gave evidence of such talent that he was entrusted with important commissions at Rome, making acquaintance by this means with one of the great Roman patrons of art, Agostino Chigi, the same for whom Raphael painted a chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo. Baldassare found leisure to devote himself to the study of architecture; from this time he seems to have had almost the happiest lot that one can imagine falling to an artist, that of building palaces and decorating them with his own hand. He began with the celebrated Farnesina Palace for Agostino Chigi, one of the most justly celebrated in Rome for its beauty. Vasari says, "This should be rather described as a thing born, than as one merely built." This he decorated with figure-pictures, the stories of Medusa, and covered with decorations in imitation relief so admirably executed, that the great Titian himself was deceived by them, and remained in astonishment when he was persuaded that they were not real. He then executed many more paintings enumerated by Vasari, and some temporary decorations, including scenes for a theatre, which seem to have been quite wonderful as illusion and for fertility of invention.

He then executes the portico of a house, and does various other paintings, decorative and pictorial. He next makes the design for the organ in a church at Siena. Being called to Bologna, he makes designs in two different styles, Italian and Gothic, for the façadē of San Petronio, builds certain houses there, paints a great chiaroscuro picture of the Adoration of the Magi, and designs the portal of San Michele in Bosco, which may be seen there to the present day; he also began another church, but was recalled to Siena to design the fortifications of that city, which having done, he returned once more to Rome, where he builds various houses, and, on the death of Raphael, is appointed architect to St. Peter's, his designs for which were so much admired that succeeding architects availed themselves of parts of them, including, I presume, as it is Vasari who says this, the great Michelangelo himself.

After executing in Rome numerous other works, including another scene for a theatre which excited much admiration, he is taken prisoner at the Sack of Rome by the Spaniards, but escapes after having painted the portrait of Constable de Bourbon after death. The last work, and not the least beautiful or important, that he executed before his death was the celebrated Palazzo Massimi, which, like the Farnese, he entirely decorated with paintings. This palace is justly considered one of the most

beautiful and ingeniously constructed in Rome.[1] I put the life of this artist briefly before you to show you the enormous gap that exists between such a man and our modern idea of an artist; I do not refer to individuals, for among the few men I have mentioned as being the only glory of our English school, we may find one at least who in the variety of his talents, and the perfection to which he brings them, may be said to emulate the painters of the great Italian period.

At the present day there is doubtless not so much need for an artist being able to practise two or more arts, the various professions being more separated; many painters in Italy moreover, probably the majority, did nothing but paint. But you will not find any of whatever school that did not understand the artistic side of architecture, even if they did not practice it as a science. All their pictures give evidence of this fact, from the time of Giotto to the decadence of the art; look through every school from the Florentine to the Venetian, and you will not find one who cannot place his figures in architectural surroundings, not only correctly drawn, but entirely designed and invented by themselves with all their beautiful and appropriate decorations, full some-

[1] See Suys and Haudebourt's work on the Palazzo Massimi, published in Paris, 1818. Lomazzo says that the sight of this palace gave him as much pleasure as that of a picture by Raphael.

times of the most ingenious inventions and original imagination. From the elegant Gothic Baldacchinos in which the early Florentines enshrined their Madonnas, to the gorgeous colonnades with which Paul Veronese enriched not always appropriately his antique and biblical subjects, all show evidence of a complete and thorough understanding of the art of architecture. And when we think of what infinite value architecture is in the composition of figures, it seems a shame that all painters should not possess a sufficient knowledge of it to draw it at least correctly, even if they do not aspire to designing it for themselves; as it is, I doubt if there be half-a-dozen figure-painters in England at the present time who could introduce correctly a background of Classic or Gothic architecture into their pictures, much less design one. Therefore, I intend to make this an important object of study in this school, and the subjects I give for composition will be generally designed with a view to practice in this art. I cannot indeed imagine a better preparation for a student of painting than that he should have been in an architect's office. Turner was apprenticed to an architect to begin with, and it is easy to see what the world would have lost, had not his profound knowledge of architecture helped him to build up those magnificent compositions which he calls Carthage and Rome, which, whatever their faults in

painting and colour, are unequalled for the effect they have on the imagination. The lectures of the architectural professor are available for all the students, and they cannot do better than attend them. I myself shall also, as far as I am able, give assistance to the students in the simpler and more leading rules of classic architecture in my Friday lectures. Akin to this study, and a necessary addition to it, is the study of Perspective. A course of lectures on this subject will therefore be open free to all students who attend the general course for the whole session. It will proceed regularly from the elements of geometrical drawing, that is, the proper use of the rule and compass and square in drawing geometrical figures, through the simpler to the higher forms of Perspective.

It is impossible that any course of instruction can make artists of those who are deficient in talent or industry, but my whole endeavour is devoted to making that course the best I am capable of devising, and if I afford the opportunities to even a few of my students to make the best of their talents, or if in the course of placing before them the objects of study to-day I have stirred their ambition, I shall have done much towards achieving my intentions in the conduct of this school, and in writing this paper.

LECTURE IX.[1]

PROFESSOR RUSKIN ON MICHELANGELO.

THE following lecture might perhaps never have been written, but for a remark in a criticism on one of my own pictures in Mr. Ruskin's *Academy Notes* for 1875. I am not ashamed to confess this; I am not over-sensitive, and Mr. Ruskin is welcome to criticise my work as severely as he pleases; no one is more aware of its shortcomings than I am myself, and compared to some of the exhibitors of that year I am let off very easily; for his remarks are fair enough, with the exception alluded to above; and to fair criticism I have no objection, only the more flippant sorts giving me even a passing feeling of annoyance; foolish perhaps, on my part, but unavoidable when the serious work of months is contemptuously dismissed in an epigrammatic paragraph by the ordinary newspaper ignoramus.[2]

[1] Given at the opening of the fifth session of the Slade School, October, 1875.

[2] "Voilà les gens qui nous jugent, qui nous insultent. . . . . Sans avoir rien appris, rien vu, impudents et ignorants" . . . "nous qui

But the passage in question introduces a name which, as my readers must by this time have discovered, I (and I am not singular in this) hold in more than ordinary reverence;—for Mr. Ruskin to speak of Michelangelo's object in his work being to show us the adaptability of limbs to awkward positions[1] indicates a depth of ignorance on his part, wilful or unconscious, that could not be

avons travaillé trente ans, étudié, comparé, qui arrivons devant le public avec une œuvre qui, si elle n'est pas parfaite, mon Dieu! je le sais bien, est au moins honnête, conscientieuse, faite avec le respect qu'on doit avoir de l'art." Thus Ingres on critics in general in his righteous anger at some unconsidered criticisms on Raphael by no less a person than M. Thiers, who set up as an art-critic. (*L'Atelier d'Ingres*, by Amaury Duval.) As a rule English art-critics start on their career by criticising the Exhibitions, and trust to time and chance hints for learning something about art. One of these gentlemen, who writes in a leading paper, unfortunately tried his "prentice hand" on the Exhibition of Old Master Drawings at the Grosvenor Gallery last winter (1879); and in making his selection for special praise and (if I remember right) for only mention among the drawings of Michelangelo, chose not only the two which were undoubtedly not genuine, but despising the warning in the Catalogue that one of them was a copy, committed himself to saying that the owner was mistaken in not ascribing it to the Master;—the original being all the time in the Academy Exhibition, and nothing less than the celebrated "Arcieri" or Archers, from Windsor, perhaps the best known of Michelangelo's drawings. I may add that to any but an ignoramus, there was no possible mistake as to the copy being a copy, though a very good one. "Voilà les gens," &c.

[1] "Of course Mr. Poynter's object is to show us, like Michelangelo, the adaptability of limbs to awkward positions."—*Academy Notes* for 1875, p. 16.

passed over; and its immediate effect was to induce me to read his lecture on Michelangelo and Tintoret, hitherto avoided by me, as, from what I had been told of it, a probable cause of vexation and annoyance. Truly it made me burn with indignation, and, the fire kindling, I felt impelled to point out the glaring perversions which Mr. Ruskin's curious spite against this greatest of artists allowed him to introduce into its pages; and not only this, but I felt it necessary to explain to my students, likely to be misled by his special pleading, the general blindness to the higher qualities of art, which is observable not only in this pamphlet, but in all Mr. Ruskin's later writings, and which is the necessary result of his want of observation of the highest form of natural beauty, and of his ignorance of the practical side of art.

In a previous lecture I have given Mr. Ruskin full credit for the exalted and beautiful spirit which pervades his writings on art, and although I fully suspected and even hinted that the result of his teaching might easily be to supplant, by a canting affection of nature-worship, the direct and healthy study which the nobler forms of art require from a young student, I contented myself with showing[1] that the opinions which form the base of

[1] See *ante*, pp. 78 *et seq.*: "I only say it is beside the question, and may easily lead to false conclusions in art. It is not that I hold the

his beautiful theories lie outside the dominion of art; and in my respect for his exalted views, his unrivalled power of poetic description, his equally unrivalled erudition, and his knowledge and love of natural history, forbore to press home the mischievous, I may almost say the deadening effect, that such theories must have on minds not masculine enough to be independent. I could hardly, indeed, anticipate that Mr. Ruskin's theories would lead him to such a display of acrimony against the painters who have been generally accepted as holding the highest place in the world of art; but consideration should have made me understand that this is the only logical conclusion to be deduced from his writings; for Mr. Ruskin has so consistently elevated the moral and sentimental side of art over the æsthetic, that we are tempted to suspect him of never having had any perception of beauty in art, as distinguished from beauty in nature; and we may search his later writings in vain for any appeciation of beauty of form or colour. Beautiful colour with him seems synonymous with bright colour, or what he would call pure colour, as typical of purity; where he once thought he saw fine colour in Titian he has since strenuously denied it; and his keen admiration

error to lie," &c. And in the next paragraph, "I can indeed conceive of no writing," &c.

of Turner's later work, which is full of crude contrasts of coarse colour, shows that his appreciation of Bellini's exquisite tones must be a mere accident. Of beauty of form he seems to have no perception whatever; as for the great artistic qualities, design and harmony, if he has ever taken them into consideration, or has ever seen them at all, he has long ago set them aside as valueless. In his first splendid volume even he is apparently blind to those higher beauties in nature which go to the making of good landscape art. The deficiency of Claude's imagination shown in the incongruous materials of which many of his pictures are made up he is careful to point out; but this has made him pass over as of secondary importance the far higher and more subtle imaginative power which enabled Claude to see and to render every phase of the limpid purity of the sky, and the tenderest gradations of luminous atmospheric effect; and you have only to ask yourself what Claude would have been if he had been wanting in this faculty, to understand that the utmost ingenuity in the arrangement and invention of material, and the utmost attention to "earnest work" in detail, would never have made him the great master of landscape that he was. That he is untrue to facts is obvious; how true he is to nature it requires taste and education to perceive.

These deficiencies of perception are the true cause of

his want of appreciation of the distinguishing qualities which make Raphael and Michelangelo what they are; and from this point it is only a step downwards to ascribe to them the baseness of intention in their art which is the running accompaniment to all the strictures in his pamphlet. Perhaps I have above (inadvertently) hit on the key-note of his exceptional invective in the case of these two painters, in speaking of them as "generally accepted" as holding the highest rank. I spoke of Mr. Ruskin in my lecture at the Royal Institution[1] as the prophet of a new religion, and this is true in a wider sense than I at the time intended; he is not only its prophet but its high-priest. He has the genuine priestly intolerance of independent judgment: partial admission of his doctrine he will not endure; you must accept it in its entirety, or you are of the enemy; he allows of no independence of opinion gained from experience. That anything should be generally accepted that he has not propounded or asserted to be true is in his eyes the unpardonable sin. Hence the comparison between Michelangelo and Tintoret; Mr. Ruskin *invented* Tintoret in his *Modern Painters*,[2] whereas Michelangelo and Raphael are accepted masters about whom others

[1] See *ante*, p. 76.

[2] In those enchanting chapters on the Imaginative Faculty at the end of the second volume.

have ventured to write; and one is irresistibly tempted to believe that for this reason they are disparaged to Tintoret's advantage. "Nearly every existing work by Michelangelo,"[1] for instance, "is an attempt to execute something beyond his powers, coupled with a feverish desire that his power may be acknowledged." Now see on the next page the delicate distinction—Tintoret is "content to fall short of his ideal."[2] Michelangelo, that is to say, aimed higher than he could achieve; Tintoret fell short of achieving what he aimed at. It is useless to waste words on such puerile distinctions. See again, in the same lecture, the amusing paragraph on oil-painting. Mr. Ruskin is here not content with boldly contradicting the well-known remark of Michelangelo that oil-painting is "proper only for women, or idle persons like Fra Sebastiano," by "making the positive statement to you that oil-painting is the art of arts";[3] but even adds in a note, in the authoritative

[1] *Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 18.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 19, and again on the same page. "Both Raphael and Michelangelo are always in dramatic attitudes, and always appealing to the public for praise."

[3] *Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 25. It is highly characteristic that Mr. Ruskin should have omitted all but the first part of this well-known and often-quoted apothegm; and it may be as well to point out that the remark was rather intended as a sarcasm on Sebastian del Piombo's laziness than as the sweeping disparagement of oil-painting which Mr. Ruskin pretends it to be; the nature of oil-painting allowing

tone in which he generally administers the mental pap, of which (in unhappy contrast, alas! to his former splendid style) so much of his later writing consists, "I beg that this statement may be observed with attention. It is of great importance." There could hardly be a more ludicrous instance of Mr. Ruskin's self-assertion in the character of a high-priest whose *ex cathedrâ* utterances are to be taken in faith; for it is certain that, as far as experience is a qualification, his opinion as to the comparative merits of fresco and oil-painting is absolutely valueless. That he has implicit faith in the docility of his audience is clear; he must be well assured that his disciples will never venture on inquiry for themselves, or he would hardly dare to make the childish assertion that Michelangelo "bandaged the heads" of his figures, as "a cheap means of getting over a difficulty too great for his patience"; the difficulty being the rendering of the hair!

the work to be dropped and taken up again at will, and so making it suitable for women (who may be supposed to be liable to interruption from other occupations) and for idle persons; fresco-painting on the other hand requiring continuous and concentrated effort, on account of the limited time during which the plaster remains in fit condition to be worked on, after which it can never be touched again,—except by a different process which takes from its special character. See Duppa's *Life of Michelangelo*, p. 209. Mr. Ruskin proceeds to point out that Michelangelo said this "because he had neither the skill to lay a single touch of good oil-painting, nor the patience to overcome its elementary difficulty."

But I have, perhaps, said enough by way of preface to the following lecture; it is questionable, indeed, whether it was worth while to say so much, when those who care to read Mr. Ruskin's pamphlet can judge for themselves whether I exaggerate in pointing out the glaring perversions of reasoning which arise from the strange animus pervading it, an animus which it will be charity to put down to the "lunacies of his declining years." [1]

In a lecture on the relation between Michelangelo and Tintoret, delivered at Oxford in 1872, Mr. Ruskin put forward views on the subject of the former artist, which were, to say the least of it, in startling contrast to those which he had previously expressed, especially in the second volume of *Modern Painters*.[2] In the remarks which follow, I have no intention of offering a detailed criticism on what Mr. Ruskin has said, but only of correcting, as far as in me lies, certain of the more glaring errors into which his present animosity against Michelangelo has led him. An instance of what I mean occurs in the passage in which he says that "you are accustomed to think the figures of Michelangelo sublime, because they are dark, and colossal,

[1] *Academy Notes* for 1875, p. 11.

[2] The reader will find Mr. Ruskin's original opinion regarding Michelangelo given in full at the end of this lecture.

and involved, and mysterious."[1] Now any one at all acquainted with the original frescoes of Michelangelo knows that the work is never dark, unless where it has been blackened by the smoke of candles, but that on the contrary the whole tone of colour in his paintings is remarkably silvery and luminous. "Colossal" his figures undoubtedly are, frequently in actual magnitude, and always in style; but this quality has not generally been considered to interfere with sublimity. "Involved" appears to me to have no special meaning as expressive of a figure, unless it be applied to it as part of a group, when I should say if this be a sin, it is one which cannot be avoided where a multitude of figures are grouped together in action; that no one ever "involved" his figures with less sacrifice of clearness than Michelangelo; or if Mr. Ruskin is using the word with a special meaning (and he does not generally use words without one), and wishes to imply by it that the figures are involved or entangled about themselves and so unintelligible, I would answer that such positions are rare, the action of Michelangelo's figures being as a rule conspicuously direct and obvious; and that when they occur, they occur for a reason, as for instance when he wishes to convey the impression of struggling and confusion, as in the groups of lost spirits fighting against the angels, who are beating them down

[1] See Mr. Ruskin's lecture on *Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 37.

to hell, in the right hand lower portion of the *Last Judgment.* "Mysterious" again means nothing in this connection. The word might be appropriate to Rembrandt, but never to Michelangelo, who was as precise in his representations of form and expression as Bellini.

Mr. Ruskin's curious animosity against Michelangelo is worth illustrating by two other of his assertions; first, that that artist "understood fresco imperfectly;" and second, that "his fresco is gone in every part of it."[1] The latter of these two remarks we all, and he as well as any of us, know to be untrue; though perhaps by never allowing either himself or his own students to look at Michelangelo's works to judge for themselves, he may persuade himself and them to believe it. The first assertion, that Michelangelo understood fresco imperfectly, (which, as a matter of fact, is only true in the most limited sense, and with reference to his first attempt in fresco,) would have been endorsed to a certain extent by Michelangelo himself. On what ground did Bramante persuade Pope Julius to employ Michelangelo on the vault of the Sistine, but that he hoped to bring him to shame through his inexperience in fresco, and so exalt his kinsman Raphael over his head?[2] and on what but the

[1] *Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 26. See also p. 16. All that he did "on a large scale in colour is in the best qualities of it perished."

[2] Condivi, *Vita di M. Buonarotti*, par. xxxiii., also Vasari's Life.

same ground did Michelangelo first refuse the work,[1] and then give it up after he had completed about a third of the painting?[2] But Mr. Ruskin also accuses him of being a bad workman in fresco: as to how far this is true there may be differences of opinion. Small portions of the painting on the ceiling have faded, but how much of this has occurred through imperfect knowledge of the material, and how much from the penetration of damp through the roof and walls, I am not aware; he would not in any case be much to blame if some of his work had faded through his imperfect acquaintance with a material, in which he was forced to experiment against his will.

Large portions of the ceiling are doubtless much covered with small cracks; chiefly in the neighbourhood of the *Temptation of Adam and Eve* and of the *Deluge*, the first part of the work he attacked. This is due to some fault in the plaster, difficult for an inexperienced hand to foresee; we find the second half of the fresco, however, very free from these cracks; the larger ones throughout are formed by the slight settlement of the building, or perhaps by the expansion and contraction of the roof under the heat of the sun; and some again may have been made by the explosion in the Castle of Saint Angelo, which by

[1] Condivi, "Scusandosi che non era sua arte, e che non riuscirebbe."

[2] See Vasari's Life of Michelangelo.

shaking out a large mass of plaster destroyed one of the figures above the Delphic Sibyl. In other respects the ceiling of the Sistine is remarkable for the perfection of its preservation. Most of it looks as if it were only just finished, and of this I can speak from knowledge, having drawn from it. Not so however with the painting of the *Last Judgment*, which is much obscured and difficult to see in places, but not through any failure in the painting. One or two small portions may show traces of fading or scaling off; for example, some of the figures in the left hand upper corner appear to be imperfect from this cause; but for this, without examination of the picture itself, it is difficult to judge how far the painter is to blame. On the other hand, this painting is almost entirely free from cracks; while for the damage it has suffered from the smoke of candles, from ill-treatment in the middle part where the Pope's canopy is placed against it, or from repainting, even Mr. Ruskin would hardly impute blame to Michelangelo. In any case to admit, or even to insist on, these rare and trifling defects in preservation (even supposing the fault to be Michelangelo's own), is a very different thing to asserting that his fresco is defaced in every part of it.

But the first on the list of Michelangelo's faults is that he is a bad workman; that is, I suppose, he tried to do what he could not do, or could not do what he tried

to do.[1] If on this point Mr. Ruskin is right, we must differ entirely on the meaning of good work. If a combination of the most exquisite finish in drawing and modelling, which allows the work to bear the closest inspection in its details, with the utmost simplicity, breadth, and clearness of effect in a distant view, constitute, as I believe they do, the elements of perfect work, I must assert positively that Michelangelo is the most perfect of workmen.

Examine the *Last Judgment;* through all its multitude of figures, from the highest to the lowest point, and into its extremest corners; and you will hardly find a face, a hand, a foot, a limb, or the smallest portion of a figure, no matter how difficult to execute, or how unimportant in its place in the composition, which is not carried to the highest point of modelling. The expression of every face, the movement of every finger, the subtle turns of torso and limb, are as exact, as individual, and as perfect in beauty of form, in the thronging figures which make up the crowd that stands beyond the principal circle, as in the central forms of the saints and martyrs crying out for salvation in the very face of Christ Himself; or as in those of the dead rising from the graves, which, being the nearest to the eye, are necessarily carried as far in finish as possible. On these points the photographs from the Sistine frescoes, which are now well known to

[1] *Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 18.

all lovers of art, furnish a complete refutation of all that Mr. Ruskin has written about them. If I pursue the examination of his remarks any further, it is not so much to point out the evasions, or rather perversions, of the real facts of the matter, into which he has been led by his desire to depreciate Michelangelo, as to bring out as prominently as I can what I consider the truth upon the subject, in order that some may in this way be led to the study of the works themselves.

A detailed defence of the scheme of the *Last Judgment* would be superfluous; ignorant people who attempt to criticise such a work have what they might perhaps consider an opinion about it; but Mr. Ruskin is not ignorant; he has chosen, nevertheless, to put forward an opinion, which, though arrived at by much apparent consideration, is not far removed from the most ill-considered judgments that have been passed upon it. Or rather he has had two opinions; his first opinion having been given in language which would lead one to infer that it is, if not the mightiest, at any rate, one of the mightiest creations of human intellect. But "we have changed all that." The truth of the matter is, that to the *art* of the work Mr. Ruskin's eyes were never opened; what he once admired was the *idea*, and the impressive effect produced on the mind by the imaginative power of the artist; and this led him to assign to its creator the great qualities which

he now denies him. He now does not admire the idea, and he thinks the impression produced is a false and dangerous one, and therefore not only assigns to him every artistic crime, but even infers personal poverty of character.[1]

Having been ever blind to the art, he does not see that this remains the same in spite of his own change of views. He goes further; he not only denies that the art is good, because he cannot see and never has seen it; but he virtually and in principle denounces all art as it has been hitherto understood from the beginning of the world until now. He does not say: I mean one thing by art and you another; he says: I will have no art; workmanship I allow and require, but not art of a higher kind. Of the higher art, in fact, which studies nature, not for

[1] For instance, "He has a feverish desire that his power may be acknowledged." "He is always in dramatic attitudes, and always appealing to the public for praise." *Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 19. It is worth while to compare with this a note to a passage in vol. ii. of the *Modern Painters*, wherein Mr. Ruskin sums up the imaginative faculty. The passage runs thus:—"Sympathy it desires—but can do without; of opinions it is regardless, not in pride, but because it is conscious of a rule of action and object of aim in which it cannot be mistaken; partly also in pure energy of desire, and longing to do and to invent more and more, which suffer it not to suck the sweetness of praise—unless a little with the end of the rod in its hand, and without pausing in its march." And now the note:—"That which we know of the lives of Michelangelo and Tintoret is eminently illustrative of this temper."

the mere object of studying, but in order to know nature for the sake of selecting what is good and rejecting what is bad, Mr. Ruskin knows nothing, or at all events allows nothing. Such art, we are to believe, the great painter is distinctly not to practise. Correggio is *not* to see nature deliciously; Raphael is *not* to see it gracefully; Michelangelo is *not* to see it sublimely.[1] This assertion that the artist is to have no independence of idea is continued throughout the lecture on Michelangelo and Tintoret, and in the pamphlet on the Academy, published in 1875.

In the former we find it dogmatically asserted that the representation of inaction or continuous action, and not of momentary action, is the attribute of good art;[2] from which it follows that "the introduction of strong or violently emotional incident is at once a confession of inferiority." Therefore, Mr. Ruskin would continue, although it must be allowed that it is not possible always literally to observe these conditions, if an artist ventures

[1] "Holman Hunt was the first assertor in painting, as I believe I myself was in art-literature," . . . . "that things should be painted as they probably did look and happen, and not as by the rules of art developed under Raphael, Correggio, and Michelangelo, they might be supposed gracefully, deliciously, or sublimely to have happened." —*Academy Notes* for 1875.

[2] "A continuous, not momentary action,—or entire inaction. You are to be interested in the living creations; not in what is happening to them."—*Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 15. Why not in both?

to represent the murderer of a saint performing his deed in any but an impassive manner, in any way in fact but as Bellini has painted the murder of Peter Martyr, in the least successful part of one of the loveliest pictures in the world,[1] he has at once confessed his inferiority. The necessary conclusion from this would be that Michelangelo is an inferior artist, not because he conceives his subjects in a way that is false to general nature (the true definition by the way of a bad artist), but because he does not take the view of the treatment which Mr. Ruskin affirms to be the only view admissible.

If Mr. Ruskin could speak his real mind about the *Last Judgment* it would probably be something to this effect: "I deny the right of Michelangelo not only to treat the subject of the *Last Judgment* in a way in which it does not appeal to me, but I deny his right to treat the nude figure at all; I have never cared to study the nude figure, and have no perception or appreciation of its beauty; when I speak of the glory of nature and of God's works, I exclude the human figure both male and female, and refer you to mossy rocks and birds-nests, sunset skies, red herrings,

[1] "Bellini's treatment of violence you may see exemplified in a notable way in St. Peter Martyr; the soldier is indeed striking his sword down into his breast, but in the face of the saint is only resignation, and faintness of death, not pain;—that of the executioner is impassive."—*Ibid.* p. 16.

by Hunt, robin redbreasts, anything you like, in fact, but the figure for its beauty. If, therefore, an artist paints the nude figure, it must be because 'he delights in the body for its own sake' (a terrible crime, truly), 'to exhibit the action of its skeleton and the contours of its flesh;'" and as he affirms in the *Academy Notes* (when he has had more time to consider the degraded motives of the unhappy Michelangelo), "to show the adaptability of limbs to awkward positions!"

Now there is not the slightest objection to the admission that Michelangelo "delighted in the body for its own sake;" whether such an admission be made on his behalf, or on that of Phidias and the whole Greek school, the merit of whose works we must remember Mr. Ruskin considers to be independent of their beauty.[1] In Mr. Ruskin's opinion, however, the introduction of the human figure is only to be permitted "in its subordination," which, as he explains it, means the place it occupies among ascetic painters, and such as knew not how to give it its proper, much less its most beautiful, form and action.

[1] "He (the Greek) rules over the arts to this day, and will for ever, because he sought not first for beauty, not first for passion, or for invention, but for Rightness."—*Aratra Pentelici*, par. 200, p. 198, and *passim*. All good art has sought for what Mr. Ruskin calls "Rightness"; the Greek of course excels by the completeness of his sense of beauty of form, and the unsurpassable perfection of execution.

The matter resolves itself then into the question, Is it or is it not an artistic error or crime to give (in Mr. Ruskin's words) action to a figure "to show its beauty"? I would just remark here in a parenthesis, that there is a vast difference between this idea and that of giving action "to show the adaptability of limbs to awkward positions," the last accusation brought against Michelangelo;—and in the same breath against myself, who only humbly try to place my figures in the most likely positions they would take under given conditions. But is it wrong to give action to a figure to show its beauty? If the action is untrue to the idea which the artist wishes to express by it, it is undoubtedly wrong. No amount of admirable execution or perception of the beauty of the figure, can possibly excuse disobedience to the higher truths of expression. This is the first rule: the action of a figure must be true to itself. The neglect of this rule, wilful or unconsidered, has been the cause of all the odious mannerisms of the later Italian and French schools; the endeavour, generally very unsuccessful, to give beauty and grace independently of nature, was the cause of the decadence of high art in those schools from the death of Raphael (it began long before the death of Michelangelo) through more than two centuries, till it reached its lowest depth in the affected inanities of Boucher and other painters of the time of Louis XV.

Again, the action must be true to the idea to be expressed in the general composition or conception of the subject. This rule I place second; partly because many positions may be equally expressive, so that no one can be said to be truer than another; partly because in some forms of composition intended to be decorative, a certain licence may be allowed; not indeed a licence of choosing a position which is untrue, but of admitting one which may not be the *most probable* under the circumstances.[1] This freedom must however be used with caution, and as a rule the *most probable* action is the one to be adopted. These two points then being well considered, the third condition, that which distinguishes the true artist from the mere painter possessed of poetic conceptions, is that the action of the figure shall be expressed in the most beautiful manner, and shall be studied so as to give the artist an opportunity for the display of the highest beauty of the form, whether it be nude or draped.

Now all these conditions Michelangelo fulfilled in a higher degree than any artist that has lived since the best Greek period. It is quite certain however that the observance of these rules and conditions is not sufficient to account for the individuality and superiority of his genius. They are the conditions under which all great

[1] As when the artist has to fill a decorative panel of unsuitable form, which occasionally may happen.

painters work. No one can be called an artist of the higher kind who does not clothe his ideas in a beautiful form. The beauty of the idea is the common property of the poet and the artist; the difference lies in the method of treatment, and it is quite possible for a painter to have a most imaginative and poetical mind, without possessing the power of giving beauty to his work.

For inexhaustible invention in the treatment of subjects, combined with the most intense dramatic power of forcing the reality of scenes upon the spectator, no one ever surpassed Albert Dürer. He had the faculty, perhaps, in a higher degree than any other artist, of bringing home to his own mind the very essence of the drama he is representing. If he had actually seen the tragedies of the Passion, and noted them on the spot, they could not have been made more real to us than as he has presented them in the splendid series of drawings in the Albertina Museum at Vienna;[1] although he uses none of the conventional means of making us feel the situation, either in its terror, as in the *Crucifixion*, or in its pathos as in the *Entombment*, or its ignominy as in the *Ecce Homo*. He rises very nearly even to the higher qualities of design in the *Deposition* and quite in the *Flagellation;* while as a workman in the lower but very necessary sphere of complete and delicate execution, few have rivalled

[1] Photographed and published by the Autotype Company.

him. As a rule, however, his absolute want of perception of beauty makes us feel that in the sense in which we admire a third-rate Italian artist of the fifteenth century, we have to reject Albert Dürer altogether. This is the meaning of Michelangelo's words with regard to him and to German art in general. In a conversation with Vittoria Colonna and others, he says, "You will find that he who was only a pupil in Italy has produced more with regard to genuine art than the master who is not from Italy. So true is this that Albert Dürer, even when wishing to deceive us, could paint nothing in which I could not observe at once that it neither came from Italy nor from an Italian artist. . . . we feel at once the difference."

This difference that we feel at once is the want of the sense of beauty. It has nothing to do with the want of power to draw correctly, for Mantegna was scarcely more able to put his figures in right proportion than Albert Dürer. This artist in wealth of imagination, in dramatic power, and ingenuity of invention, corresponds very closely with Albert Dürer. He also had a kindred love of dwelling on minute detail, and that searching desire to develope and bring into evidence the most unimportant accidents, which gives to his and to Albert Dürer's draperies the same angular and broken character. Yet in Mantegna's work we feel the sense of beauty pervading it to the smallest detail. In this very

matter of draperies there is a light fluttering beauty in Mantegna which is in the happiest contrast to the ponderous clumsiness of Albert Dürer. In Mantegna the draperies express, as if by instinct, the limbs and movements. In Albert Dürer they weigh down the figures with their cumbrous folds, and seem wherever possible to contradict with an awkward contrariety their expression and action. For beauty of action, too, Mantegna is unsurpassed, even among Italian painters (witness the nymphs dancing in the beautiful picture of Apollo and the Muses in the Louvre), while Albert Dürer, vigorous as the action of his figures is, never in his life put the beauty of animation into his heavily moving persons. This is the difference, and it is a most important one to remember, between the complete artist and the man of ideas who paints. Ideas we must have, and the power of expressing them we must have, in all work that is not merely imitative; but the art consists in clothing these ideas in a beautiful form. When we add to these conditions a profound and thorough knowledge of nature, so as to add the *power* of expressing in perfection the promptings of a lofty imagination and instincts of beauty, we have the highest of which art is capable. Ideas and instincts of beauty we find in all the best Italian art, but a complete knowledge of nature only in one man. This it is really which raises Michelangelo above all the

other Italian artists; and the reason why Michelangelo learned the body "essentially from the corpse," and studied its mechanism in death, was that he might have the *power* to express it living;[1] not, as Mr. Ruskin insists, for the mere sake of display.

The genius of Michelangelo consisted, first, in the gift of concentrating his powers on the single important point of expression, so that he had no need of accessories to help him out with his story; and next in something which is higher than that, something which defies analysis, which has been expressed as "Titanic" and "colossal," and which Mr. Ruskin in his previous writings has described as an "inexplicable power proceeding from an imaginative perception almost superhuman which goes whither we cannot follow." All this undoubtedly places him on the solitary mountain height, where he reigns apart from and above other mortals, but all this be it remembered must have remained unexpressed but for the knowledge which alone enabled him to express it. And more than this, too, without something of that same knowledge in the student, the highest qualities of Michelangelo's works must ever remain a sealed book to him. Without being acquainted

[1] "Michelangelo and Raphael drew the body from vanity and from knowledge of it dead."—*Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 30. "Raphael and Michelangelo learned it essentially from the corpse, and had no delight in it whatever, but great pride in showing that they knew all its mechanism."—*Ibidem*, p. 31.

by study with the capabilities for beauty, force, and activity in the human figure, we can never know how absolutely founded on nature, how true to nature in respects inconceivable to the mind untrained in this direction, is every figure that Michelangelo ever produced. For this reason the imagination displayed by Michelangelo in the *art* of his work, quite a distinct matter from that displayed in the treatment of the subject, is beyond the apprehension of those who have not made the human figure a subject of practical study.

As far however as Michelangelo's genius is capable of analysis, it is possible to point out wherein lies his marvellous power of impressing us; the innate genius escapes us, the calculated effects we may discover. First among these calculated effects comes the point to which all his study and all his powers were directed, after considering the best method of carrying out his conception of the subject; this was the endeavour (which Mr. Ruskin condemns) to give the best action to his figures which should show their beauty; or, in simpler words, he desired, as other painters desire, to express his idea by the most beautiful treatment. As however he considered figures the highest means of telling a story, and never condescended to help himself out by other means, he treated all his subjects with figures only, and his attention was concentrated on the most beautiful form, action, and expression, which he could give

to them. But on one point he never fails; the thought is never lost sight of, the idea is always paramount; the figure is never, as Mr. Ruskin pretends to think, posed only for its beauty; some natural and appropriate intention is the basis of every figure he ever painted. In the series of nude figures in the vault of the Sistine, which are purely decorative as regards their introduction and position, answering, as they do, to the figures of genii and angels so common on Classic and Italian architectural friezes, there is always, beyond the mere intention of beautiful arrangement, some leading idea to be expressed. If the figure is to express repose, it expresses it absolutely; the repose is deep and contemplative. In activity the figure is full of life and youth and spirits; in wearisome labour, it is colossal in build, and struggles under the burden, thus expressing the idea in the most forcible way. If fatigue and pain are to be expressed, the head and body are those of a beautiful youth, so that the feeling of pity is doubly awakened. And here I would draw attention to the way in which the face is always with Michelangelo the first idea. So far from neglecting the face for the body, as Mr. Ruskin asserts, no one ever made the body answer so completely to the expression of the face; without the face the movements of the body I allow may be made unintelligible, as in the preposterous engravings after Michelangelo which, before the Sistine Chapel was photographed, were all

the untravelled artist had to guide his appreciation; but the expression of the face explains everything. The *beauty* of his faces may however be a matter of opinion; Mr. Ruskin says he never could help making them satyr-like; and as an illustration curiously adduces the Oxford drawing, No. 9 in Mr. Robinson's Catalogue, a head strongly expressive of pride and malevolence,[1] the precise contrary to everything we imagine as satyric; satanic is perhaps the word he meant to use.

Upon this point of expression we observe a most interesting change which took place during the progress of the ceiling. At first the treatment of the figures is more purely decorative, their expression and sentiment being however always appropriate to the occasion, and the feeling of real humanity, of thoughtfulness, combined with gentle melancholy, taking the place of the merely abstract expressionless form which had hitherto been considered sufficient for such a purely decorative treatment. But this, although it is the essence of the beauty with which the figures impress us, is secondary to the idea of design and arrangement; while as we advance the importance of the idea increases, so that although they still are placed in pairs and balance each other completely in line and mass, as decorative figures should, the idea of representing some mood or passion gains ground and becomes the paramount

[1] *Michelangelo and Tintoret*, p. 33.

idea, the purely decorative intention taking in its turn a subordinate place. This is the aim of Michelangelo in these groups, and not, if I may be allowed to refer again to Mr. Ruskin, the desire to show adaptability of limbs to awkward positions; no, not in these nor in any group or figure he painted in the whole of his life.

Again, as regards his intention, his calculated effect in the treatment of figures, observe the figure of the Messiah in the *Last Judgment.* He feels that here in this multitude of figures, the head and the central position alone are insufficient to express the might and power of Christ, so that the whole of his energies are directed to making a body of colossal and simple grandeur exceeding in majesty of form all around Him. The head does not represent the Christ that we know by tradition; it has been likened to that of a Jupiter or an Apollo. We, according to our various conceptions of the relations of God to man, may have our own views as to whether this is an adequate representation of the Christ that Christians adore, and to many the simple gentleness of early treatment may be more appropriate. Michelangelo had to consider what he could *best* express in that tremendous scene, and what he has chosen to represent is the power to command the dead to rise, to condemn the sinful, and to raise the righteous; and it is that power that we feel in the magnificent figure of the Christ. It is to me the culmination of this

gigantic work, and it seems but feeble and foolish to stand before it, and speak of the "confession of inferiority" in the introduction of strong and emotional incident.

I must explain before I conclude, that I do not misunderstand what Mr. Ruskin means, when he speaks of this "confession of inferiority" in comparison with the serenity of Bellini, which he considers a higher attribute than the tumult of Michelangelo's art. He has, as is often the case, confused two ideas. The idea of Bellini living his ninety years, painting his lovely and peaceful pictures (for no pictures are so lovely, and to see Bellini's work at Venice for the first time is a revelation of beauty), his tender Madonnas and angels who "sing as calmly as the Fates weave," in scenes where everything goes on without gesture or effort, is so attractive to him, that he does not perceive, that though all this makes Bellini *more exclusively* an artist than painters who are more disturbed by the world, it does not necessarily make him a *greater* artist. It is with this misunderstanding that he places this gentle nature higher than the passionate mind, whose stormy energy is reflected from all his works. After all, is Michelangelo less of an artist because he had not that tranquil power of abstraction, and because the sadness of his mind shows itself as a pervading characteristic of his faces? Is he the worse artist because at a distracting time he devoted his best energies with passionate love to the

defence of his beloved native city, and only stole away in secret and at night to work on the statues for the family to which politically he was opposed, but which he cherished in his memory as that of his benefactors? I confess I think not. Surely that the sorrow and conflicting emotions of those moments should burn in the cold marble of those solemn figures in the Mausoleum of the Medici, will never again be considered an expression of inferiority. Surely the "shadowed face" of Duke Lorenzo[1] never has till now, and never will again, be made by any one the subject of a sneer.

In happiest contrast to Mr. Ruskin's rancorous criticism is the sympathetic essay on Michelangelo by M. Charles Clément, first written for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and published in a small volume together with similar short notices of Lionardo da Vinci and Raphael. These three notices are remarkable, not only for the beautiful spirit in which they are written, but for the justice with which the three characters are compared and analysed. The passage on the Medici monuments is worth quoting

[1] This "shadowed face" is cited by Mr. Ruskin to illustrate the third of Michelangelo's crimes, as expressing "physical instead of mental interest"; and he goes on to sneer at the unfinished head of the Twilight. Students of Michelangelo's life will remember the conditions, referred to in the text, under which these monuments were executed.

at length, if only to lead students who do not know M. Clément's book to read it for themselves :—

"Rien ne prête à l'émotion dans cette chapelle, claire, blanche et froide ; et, cependant, qui pourrait voir les statues de Julien, de Laurent, les quatre figures allégoriques qui décorent deux par deux les sarcophages, sans être fortement et profondément ému ? Michelange ne s'est pas arrêté aux portraits de ses modèles. Dans le tombeau de Jules II., Rachel et Lia représentent la vie active et la vie contemplative ; dans le tombeau des Médicis, les figures de Julien et Laurent personnifient la pensée et l'action. Les quatre allégories,—L'Aurore et le Crépuscule, le Jour et la Nuit,—rapellent les phases principales et la rapidité de la destinée de l'homme. Les deux figures de Julien et de Laurent sont assises. Julien est jeune, digne et hardi ; il est armé, et appuie son bâton de commandement sur ses genoux. Laurent [1] est plongé dans une sombre méditation ; sa tête, pleine de pensées, est soutenue sur sa main ; le doigt sur les lèvres semble vouloir arrêter jusqu'au murmure de la respiration. Est-ce la ruine de Florence qu'il regarde de ses yeux absorbés et profonds ? Que dire de la majesté et de la puissance de la statue du Jour, de la titanique beauté de celle de la Nuit, de la grâce sérieuse de l'Aurore, qui s'éveille avec tristesse dans un monde de

[1] As Mr. Ruskin points out, the names for these two statues should be reversed. Giuliano, not Lorenzo, is "Il Pensieroso."

douleurs? La langue est impuissante à expliquer les idées que l'art représente; mais le public [not having Mr. Ruskin as a guide] ne se méprit pas un instant sur la signification de ces figures; il appela la statue de Laurent *Il Pensieroso*, le Penseur. La figure de la Nuit fit une si vive et si universelle impression, qu'une foule de poëtes s'empressèrent de la célébrer." Then follow the well-known stanzas attributed to Strozzi, and Michelangelo's verses in reply, "qui sont peut-être les plus beaux qu'il ait écrits, et qui témoignent dans quel trouble de cœur et d'esprit il avait conçu et achevé son plus parfait ouvrage de sculpture."

I am aware that in Mr. Ruskin's voluminous writings (and I do not pretend to have read half that he has written), may be found passages innumerable conveying to the reader a completely different impression of his views from those which he has put forward in his pamphlet on Michelangelo and Tintoret. But it is difficult not to believe that he has in this spoken out his heart; moreover, he has in his later writings denied much of what he wrote in the *Modern Painters*. I cannot however resist closing this paper by quoting the whole of Mr. Ruskin's first opinion about Michelangelo, often alluded to in these lectures, which some of his readers may by this time have forgotten, which he himself perhaps has forgotten; and in doing this I cannot but think that I am not only not

doing Mr. Ruskin an injustice, but that I am rendering him the best service in my power: "Yet Mino stopped at the human nature; he saw the soul, but not the ghostly presences about it; it was reserved for Michelangelo to pierce deeper yet, and to see the indwelling angels. No man's soul is alone; Laocoon or Tobit, the serpent has it by the heart or the angel by the hand; the light or the fear of the spiritual things that move beside it may be seen on the body; and that bodily form with Buonarotti, white, solid, distinct, material, though it be, is invariably felt as the instrument or the habitation of some infinite, invisible power. The earth of the Sistine Adam that begins to burn; the woman-embodied burst of adoration from his sleep; the twelve great torrents of the Spirit of God that pause above us there, urned in their vessels of clay; the waiting in the shadow of futurity of those through whom the Promise and Presence of God went down from the Eve to the Mary, each still and fixed, fixed in his expectation, silent, foreseeing, faithful, seated each on his stony throne, the building stones of the word of God, building on and on, tier by tier, to the Refused one, the head of the corner; not only these, not only the troops of terror torn up from the earth by the four-quartered winds of the Judgment, but every fragment and atom of stone that he ever touched became instantly inhabited by what makes the

hair stand up and the words be few; the St. Matthew, not yet disengaged from his sepulchre, bound hand and foot by his grave-clothes, it is left for us to loose him; the strange spectral wreath of the Florence Pietà, casting its pyramidal, distorted shadow, full of pain and death, among the faint purple lights that cross and perish under the obscure dome of Sta. Maria del Fiore; the white lassitude of joyous limbs, panther-like, yet passive, fainting with their own delight, that gleam among the pagan formalisms of the Uffizii, far away, separating themselves in their lustrous lightness, as the waves of an Alpine torrent do by their dancing from the dead stones, though the stones be as white as they; and finally, and perhaps more than all, those four ineffable types, not of darkness nor of day, not of morning nor of evening, but of the departure and the resurrection, the twilight and the dawn of the souls of men, together with the spectre sitting in the shadow of the niche above them; all these, and all else that I could name of his forming, have borne, and in themselves retain and exercise, the same inexplicable power—inexplicable because proceeding from an imaginative perception almost superhuman, which goes whither we cannot follow, and is where we cannot come; throwing naked the final, deepest root of the being of man, whereby he grows out of the invisible, and holds on his God home."

LECTURE X.[1]

THE INFLUENCE OF ART ON SOCIAL LIFE.

To take any general survey of the effect of art on society is a task of extreme difficulty. The subject is complicated by its connection with so many of the questions which remain a puzzle even to those who inquire most deeply into the workings of our social system, that I may well be excused from attempting any full treatment of it within the limits of this address. Seeing however that I have been requested to preside over the art section of a congress which has for its aim the discussion of all kinds of social difficulties with a view to improvement or reform, I find myself under the necessity of attempting, if not the solution of the main problem, yet at any rate the elucidation of those conditions under which alone art can produce that influence for good which I believe it can, and ought, to produce upon society.

[1] Delivered at the Liverpool Meeting of the Social Science Congress, *October*, 1876.

With this in view I would venture to suggest the following questions:—In the first place, would the universal extension of a spirit and love of art—such a public spirit as should exact of our artists, manufacturers, and workmen, that all their productions should be characterised by the highest workmanship, skill, and taste—contribute to the general welfare and progress of the nation? In the second, to what extent can the cultivation and practice of art be made to take such a hold on our national life, and so to permeate all classes of society, that such an end may be brought about, and that the national sentiment may not permit the making or exhibition of anything false in principle or offensive to taste? And in the third, how can such a state of things, which certainly does not now exist, be created amongst us?

The mere propounding of these questions will show that a host of collateral difficulties, connected with various matters which agitate the minds of men, arise to perplex us; and that to answer them thoroughly we must carry speculation much further than an inquiry into the refining influence of the higher forms of decorative art. From those who hold with me that the very essence of good art is to be found, above all things, in honest and good workmanship; that,—while we may almost allow that the humblest object of manufacture may become a work of art by being well done, it is quite certain that the finest

and smartest object of "virtù" can have no pretensions to be a work of art unless it is of good workmanship and genuine manufacture,—the answer to the first of these questions would doubtless be, that a general diffusion of a sound artistic spirit would be an unmixed good. We know however that opinions are strongly and sharply divided on this point; since the ideas of material progress and welfare in vogue with a large section of the community are in direct opposition to the very existence of an art the principles of which seem to us so obvious; to calculate therefore on any general artistic sentiment becoming a part of our national life would seem more hopeless now than it ever has been. Before this can happen, it is not too much to say that not only must our national characteristics be other than they are, but our beliefs in the efficacy of much that is thought essential to the progress, enlightenment, and happiness of mankind must be eradicated. To philosophise on this point, however, is not very profitable, and will lead us to no very valuable conclusions. I have merely hinted at the difficulties which surround a question, which, if insisted on, is perhaps incapable of solution, and which is at all events out of my province as an artist, and had better be left for the political and social economists to settle.

I find myself obliged therefore to take for granted at the outset, what most persons indeed will readily agree to,

that the influence of a genuine art must necessarily be an influence for good. This being admitted, we still have before us the difficult question of how such an influence may be best diffused. And first it will be necessary to inquire to what extent such a diffusion of art-influence may be practicable, and how far there is any possibility of a genuine love of art taking hold on people generally, so that it shall seriously affect the whole community. Is it possible, for instance, ever to recover amongst us the feeling, which is now extinct, but of which a faint tradition lingered perhaps as late as the Great Exhibition of 1851, that it was not worth while to make furniture that would come to pieces, or to build a house which would not need repair for at least a reasonable time? I do not mean to say that the class of contractors and manufacturers did not at all times contain individuals who scamped their work; but in former times the bad work was the exception, now it is the rule, openly the rule, and a piece of well-made furniture, or a well-built house, is an article of luxury, and must be made or built by specially trained hands. I have no intention however of taking into consideration in this address any of the moral causes, such as the ardour to make money at any cost to the public, or trade jealousies, or other causes of the kind, that tend, especially in these days, to the degeneracy of art or manufacture; but rather the inevitable social changes, which are the result of

material progress and civilisation. If we ask, then, is the return to such a state of things possible, or, to put it more fairly, is the return to the time when every workman was also an artist possible, I answer that under existing social conditions it is impossible.

That feeling of love for good work for its own sake and of pleasure in bringing it to perfection, which is perhaps the most certain evidence of a genuine artistic spirit, was not in former times the property of a few individuals of superior gifts and education; it was the common property of all handicraftsmen, whether possessed of original talent or not. I do not for a moment pretend that such a spirit as this has ever risen in this country to the dignity of a national sentiment, and at no time do I imagine that a cheap or easy mechanical substitute for labour would have been refused on artistic grounds. That such a state of national sentiment has existed in the world is, however, indubitable. We have the evidence of everything that the Greeks[1] have handed down to us from the best times of their art, that, amongst them at least, nothing short of perfection was tolerated; nay more, that they were possessed of a critical faculty which would seem to have

[1] This would perhaps be more exactly true of the Athenians than of the Greeks as a nation, for the new discoveries at Elis seem to show that occasionally they put up with very inferior work (see the *Edinburgh Review* for Jan. 1879); but the almost universal perfection of Greek work shows that such a feeling must have existed very widely.

surpassed our own, so that their trained and cultivated perceptions were satisfied with nothing less than a subtlety of form and proportion, the advantages of which to our coarser senses seem inappreciable. Nor is it only in their more important works that this perfection is to be found, or in the decoration of such things as our modern cant calls art-objects; the evidence of their instinctive love of beauty and perfection of workmanship is equally to be seen in their more trifling productions. The Greeks in their art did not aim merely at adornment; they aimed above everything at completeness and consistency, while their natural instincts, heightened by cultivation, supplied them with ever-varying forms of that beauty which can be appreciated by the eye, but of which description can convey no idea. We may safely say that everything they produced was a work of art, because they never tolerated anything short of perfection in workmanship; and we cannot but believe that the noblest spirit of rivalry in art animated the whole people from the highest to the lowest.

It is melancholy to turn from such a state of things to our own times and surroundings, and it is only too clear that we must be content in our own social life with aiming at something very far short of the Greek ideal, and even then we must be satisfied if we get a tithe of what we desire.

This is not the occasion to inquire into the causes of the high standard maintained at this glorious epoch of Greek art; but, whatever they were, it must be pointed out that there is no possibility of their ever again coming into operation. The very perfection to which mechanical methods of production have been brought, raising as it does works of mechanical skill almost to the level of works of art in their wonderful precision and finish, has given the death-blow to true artistic workmanship, the charm of which lies as much in the individual character given through the skill of the workman as in the invention displayed in the design. What is now required of the skilled mechanic is not so much that he should understand how to make any particular object, as that he should know how to manage the machine by which it is made. It is useless however to deplore and rail against this invasion of machinery; the best thing that can be done under the circumstances is to devote ourselves to the consideration of how far it will be possible to make it, under existing conditions, subservient to the principles of sound art.

The first instance I take shall be from the subject of engineering. There can be no question that for the worst of the eyesores which the progress of civilisation has inflicted on our unhappy cities the responsibility rests with the engineers. That whole districts should be

given up to desolation in our large towns, through the invasion of railways and their appurtenances, is probably unavoidable, at least under the hap-hazard arrangements which have governed the growth of the railway system; but that the few spots favoured by picturesqueness of grouping, or real architectural beauty, should have their charm destroyed at one blow by the intrusion of some hideous railway bridge or station, shows an amount of heartlessness on the part of the constructors, and I may add of the public, which permits such things to be done, at which we might well be surprised, did we not know that a large section of the community admires at heart what is supposed to be a fine practical preference for utility over sentiment.

Perhaps the most obtrusive results of this feeling are to be found in London. The views along the Thames, from Westminster to London Bridge, were extremely picturesque, and embraced many beautiful architectural features; they were only marred to the public eye by the meanness of the buildings and wharves along the banks, and it was wisely determined to add an embankment, which, if it destroyed inevitably some of the picturesqueness, dear to artists, that is always to be found among barges and waterside sheds, has undoubtedly added an architectural dignity which is worthy of a great city. Strange to say, what was given with one hand was

more than taken away with the other; monster railway stations of hideous and apparently useless proportions were erected, which overshadowed and dwarfed by contrast our one beautiful waterside building, Somerset House, and eclipsed by comparison the groups of spires, and the beautiful Dome which rises above the banks. Blackfriars Bridge, another of our finest architectural works, is flanked by two railway bridges, which would appear to have been made ugly on purpose, and we are also at this moment threatened with the disfigurement of another noble structure; it is not at all certain that London Bridge will not be eventually ruined by the addition of iron footways on each side; and the public is supposed to believe that these additions will not be objectionable, because they are to be covered with some trumpery Gothic ornament. A bridge at Florence, of no great architectural pretensions, perhaps, but a most interesting and picturesque memorial of the past, has just been wantonly ruined in this very way. But the cruel treatment which that beautiful city has suffered of late years is too painful a subject to dwell on.

Now, it is doubtless inevitable that such constructions should be made of iron. If iron is more suitable and cheaper for such purposes than either stone or brick, it is absurd to imagine that it will not be used. It seems to me, however, neither necessary that iron railway bridges

and stations should be as ugly as they are; nor that the only alternative should be to make them an imitation of unsuitable architecture; nor again that they should be adorned with inappropriate ornament by way of beautifying them. A notable instance of this misconception, which seems to prevail so widely, is afforded by the bridge that was built over Ludgate Hill. It is probable that the specially offensive form of construction that is placed there was the cheapest form of bridge that could be made; of that I am no judge; but it is quite certain that an engineer, who had but a little ingenuity beyond what is required for the calculation of strain and cost, might have invented something which in its original form should have been less offensive to the eye. The view of St. Paul's up Ludgate Hill, with the small spire in the mid-distance making a composition of the kind that delights an artist, and at the same time giving dignity by its slender proportions to the imposing mass behind, was heightened in effect by the framing of a busy and picturesque street, and seemed to unite every point that is characteristic and interesting in a great city. The public in this case resented the offence to taste, and the company was obliged to spend a large sum of money in covering the bridge with ornament which it was impossible could be otherwise than both unsuitable and useless. A very moderate quota of the national sentiment, which I

have referred to as the property of the Greek nation, would have prevented the possibility of the erection of this bridge in such a spot.

I have said that the use of iron is a necessity in modern engineering works; but I have no hesitation in adding that where these are obliged to intrude themselves on places already made beautiful by fine architectural features, the public, and the authorities responsible to it, ought to insist that whatever is put up should be in harmony with the surroundings. In the case just referred to, an iron structure should not have been permitted at all. If the bridge was a necessity, and it must be supposed that it was, the engineer should have been obliged, by the same authority that enforced the addition of the expensive ornamental brackets, to build it of stone. An arch in the style of Blackfriars Bridge would at least have been a handsome feature in itself.

But there are many situations where the use of iron structures is not only a necessity, but need be in no way objectionable. There is here in Liverpool a construction of which the inhabitants are justly proud. I refer to the Landing-stage, which in the ingenuity of its design, its admirable fitness for its purpose, and the excellence of its workmanship, combined with the picturesque accompaniments of river-life, may be rightly considered in the light of a work of art. The effect of it is, however, to

a great extent marred by the ugliness of the iron bridges which connect it with the mainland. It seems to me not too much to say that there is not the least need for their ugliness; surely little more ingenuity spent on their construction might have made them not only inoffensive to the eye, but positively agreeable. There are here no architectural features in the immediate neighbourhood; the surroundings are the wharves and docks and warehouses, which are the glory of a great commercial city, and which have a character of their own; any attempt then to have made these bridges architecturally beautiful would have been wasted in such a spot. Nevertheless I cannot but conceive that there must be a method of carrying out such works which should combine strength and lightness with elegance, without going beyond the necessary conditions of iron-structure. But it gives of course less trouble to an engineer to make a square iron-box which shall be strong enough to bear the traffic, than to go out of his way to devise something less open to objection; if anything of a more ornamental nature appears necessary, he is saved any further consideration by handing his work over to an architect or artist to plaster with decoration.

Without dwelling any further on this subject, I may be able to draw a conclusion more or less satisfactory from the remarks I have made. Seeing then that

engineering is distinctly an art of the present and future, and that both its materials, and the principles and conditions of their employment, are different to any which have hitherto been known; if it is ever to have any beauty of its own, or, to put it more hopefully, if its results are ever to be less objectionable than they are now, it must be by seeking for such results within the necessary conditions of its existence, and not by the addition or superposition of an utterly unsuitable style of ornament, drawn from past ages and a different order of things. In short, the exercise of ingenuity in works of pure utility must be made to occupy the place filled by decoration in ornamental design.

Passing on now to works of art properly so called, and to those works of manufacture in which decorative art plays a more or less important part, we find that here the conditions are different. In these, as has been already noticed, part of the charm will be derived from the beauty of the workmanship, and the individuality given by the mind and touch of the workman, a phase of artistic beauty to which mechanical reproduction is death. What is it that we admire in Japanese art? No doubt the marvellous and inexhaustible fertility of invention, and the perfect rendering of natural forms; but still more, if possible, the exquisite workmanship, which surpasses anything that European hands are capable of. Or to confine

ourselves to European art; wherein lies the beauty of those old Venetian glass goblets, which have the elegance and fragility of a harebell on its stem, and almost its fairy-like lightness? Doubtless, in the first place, in loveliness of design and delicacy of material; but equally also in the taste of the handicraftsman, whose skill has triumphed over the extreme difficulty of producing a perfectly beautiful form in a material requiring such rapid and dexterous treatment as molten glass. It must be remembered that to gain this triumph he *must* do the work well; the more exact and true he makes it, the more artistic is the result. This is so obvious a truism that it might be thought superfluous, were it not that there are many persons, manufacturers and others, who consider that the more crooked and irregular such objects are, the more artistic they ought to be considered, forgetting that the imperfections are due to the stubbornness of the material, and that the greatest artist is he who overcomes them best. I make a digression in order to dwell on this point, because I think it one on which the public wants enlightening. There is no doubt that owing to the ill-advised expressions of customers, and perhaps also of some artists, the firm which now reproduces the old Venetian glass has fallen short of what it might have done, through the idea that it is an advantage that the bowls of wine-glasses should be stuck on one side and the necks of

decanters twisted awry, and that the results are in this way more artistic than they would be with neater workmanship. This is an error, however, which has grown out of what was originally a truth,—that the imperfections of hand-work are preferable to the cold and lifeless accuracy of mechanical productions.

It is not with the intention of discrediting the efforts of another firm, which has done wonders in rendering a coarser kind of pottery really artistic, that I refer to a mistake which was committed of the same kind. These gentlemen are apparently under the impression that an additional artistic value is given to their work when the coloured glazes they apply run into confusion or half-disappear in the process of firing, as when a blue glaze applied to a flower at the top of a jar runs into a blotch at the bottom edge. There is no doubt an agreeable variety produced in pottery, where it is not intended to be of the finer kind, through the accidents of glazing and firing; and some most splendid results in colour have been gained in ancient Chinese porcelain through the studied use of glazes which partially melt into each other in the fire; but in an ordinary way, and especially where there is a pattern to be picked out in colour, to make a point of such accidents is a misapprehension of the rule which is applicable to all works of art—that the intention should always be to make

the work as good as the material and other conditions will permit.[1]

To return, however. How much of this skill of hand and eye is required by the modern glass-maker or potter? His business is not to use his discretion or his natural taste in giving elegance to the form of the glass or pot he is making, but to manage the mould out of which thousands of exactly similar objects are produced; for there is no doubt that the manufacturer believes that forms are much better produced by the mould than by hand-work. In a small work on glass-making by Apsley Pellatt this opinion is distinctly expressed. After describing the skilful and ingenious way in which the old Venetians made their diamond mouldings, he says that "equally good effects are produced by modern glass-makers in a more direct manner by making brass open-and-shut, or dip-moulds, so as to give at one operation the entire diamond impression, thus saving the tedium of forming each diamond separately."

[1] I understand that Messrs Doulton affirm that so far from these accidents being intentional, their efforts are directed to avoiding their occurrence, which would perhaps point to there being something wrong in the manufacture, as the colours are very clearly and cleanly defined in the old *Grès de Flandre.* But I am confident that with the "artistic" public the charm is believed to be in the imperfection; I learn from the remarks of my æsthetic friends that it is certainly so in the case of modern Venetian glass.

It is true that to an uncultivated eye the effect may be equally good, and that to save labour and produce in great quantities may be a necessity; but in the process the original charm has disappeared, and the delicate fabric has become a mechanical production without life, made probably at a tenth of the cost, and with a tenth of the labour, but one which, so far as the artistic value of its "diamond moulding" goes, it was superfluous to make at all. It would be very foolish to suppose that mechanical reproduction can be done away with; it is part of the necessity of the times; it is certainly a result of our material progress which we cannot go back from and, as I have already said, the conditions, under which everything made before the introduction of machinery was in one sense a work of art, can never be restored. All I should wish to be generally understood is, that we must not delude ourselves into the belief that we can produce works of art by the substitution of machinery for hand labour, or that the decoration of objects of common utility by a mechanical process can ever have any artistic value. We should indeed have made an immense step in advance if the public could be persuaded that it is better to have no decoration at all than such as is purely mechanical.[1]

[1] These remarks have been misinterpreted in some newspaper criticisms to mean that mechanical processes should in no case be made

There are cases, however, where a system of mechanical reproduction interferes seriously with such designedly decorative works as might otherwise have a high artistic value; I mean where skill and taste are applied to the decoration

use of in art. It was a question with me when writing this lecture, whether it would not be better to anticipate objections by a digression on this very point; but I felt that this would so interfere with the course of the argument, that I thought it better to leave it to the intelligence of my audience to infer a certain amount of common sense on my part. Some remarks lately made by Sir Henry Cole at Manchester prove to me, however, that I have not expressed myself with sufficient fulness. It is well to state, therefore, that I had no such intentions as he assumes. The reason why the objections to the mechanical production of the embossed decoration of a wine-glass do not hold good in the case of the printed patterns on a wall-paper or chintz are clear enough on a little consideration. That a repeated pattern may look well, its repetitions must be true; in a chintz or wall-paper, therefore, mechanical reproduction becomes a positive advantage, as the accurate repetition by hand of a pattern recurring some hundreds and thousands of times is either impossible, or so nearly impossible, and in any case so laborious, as to appal one with the idea of the wasted time and energy requisite to such a result; a result so easily achieved by mechanical means. Imagine the attempt to execute by hand the five or six hundred repetitions, to be found in a small room (such as the one in which I am writing) of the elaborately involved patterns in one of the "Morris papers" to which Sir Henry refers me; the result would either be simple chaos, in a case where *precision* in the repeated forms is a chief point in the effect required by the designer: or we should require a twelvemonth's work by a skilful workman, which would after all be less effective than a few hours' use of the printing-blocks. On the other hand, in decorations where there is no repetition, as in the case of the Chinese hand-painted papers of birds and flowering-trees, it would not only be more laborious to print the pattern, but it is the

of objects originally produced by mechanical means. The beauty of a Greek vase or of a Majolica jar is twofold: it resides first in the form, which besides being beautiful in itself, has the charm of handicraft to which I have

freedom of the hand-work which gives the charm, the fancy of the artist coming in at every touch.

The objections to mechanical reproduction in the case of the wine-glass quoted above are more complex. In the first place, the necessity for added decoration is not so strong: blank walls where we could not employ an artist to paint them, or single-coloured chintzes where we could not have hand-embroidery, would become wearisome to the eye to such a degree that some easily-produced form of decoration becomes a necessity; but a plain wine-glass of a good form is nearly, if not quite, as pretty as an embossed one, and the variations to be made in the form alone are practically endless. In the next place, the making of the diamond pattern in the old way involves no laborious process (it is only too slow for the exigencies of trade), but merely a certain amount of easily-acquired skill on the part of the workman; *the skill itself* (as explained above) *giving the charm to the work.* In brief, by our manufacturers a decorative feature is added to the glass by mechanical means, which only has value when it is not done by mechanical means. It is needless to multiply illustrations and arguments which will readily suggest themselves to the reader, and it must be remembered that I only use the wine-glass accidentally as an illustration, and not as an extreme case. Although an exact definition is not easy, it may be broadly affirmed that mechanical reproduction in art begins to be objectionable at the point where, precise and multiplied repetition not being one of the conditions, the charm of free and skilful treatment outweighs the imperfections and the more lengthened processes of hand-work; and conversely, it ceases to be offensive to taste where the labour of hand-work not only becomes oppressive to the imagination, but ceases to fulfil the requisite conditions.

referred; and, secondly, in the decoration. Now, I would ask, what is the use of a manufacturer spending large sums of money on the decoration of a vase which is disfigured, not only by the monotony of surface and form which is the inevitable result of moulding used instead of throwing from the wheel, but by the obtrusive rib which the mould leaves down each side, and which nobody is at the pains to remove before it goes into the artist's hands. I have had under my notice vases ornamented with unquestionable taste and the most delicate manipulative skill, on which much time and labour had been spent by the artist and no small sum of money by the manufacturer, the effect of which was entirely marred by this obtrusive blemish, and by the fact that the pots were moulded instead of turned. If complaint were made to the artist, he would probably complain in his turn that he is obliged to take what the manufacturer gives him, and has no means of getting anything better, for all the manufacturers are alike. If to the manufacturer, he would say that it makes no difference to him; that it pays him as well as if he took more pains, because people who buy do not notice a fault of this kind, but only look to the decoration. From his point of view he is no doubt right, and although there are happily not wanting among our manufacturers men of spirit and taste who will go to expense, and incur risk, in the production of articles of what

is called art-manufacture, none will hazard any loss on the regular profits of their business. The fault lies in the original method of making, which has sunk from a fine art to a mechanical process; and if the manufacturer were so far a man of taste as to wish to alter it, he would find himself in the difficulty of having to set up new machinery, and engage a different class of workmen, which he would probably not be able to get unless he trained them for the purpose. We thus find ourselves in a vicious circle: the artist cannot help himself; the manufacturer will not help him, for he makes for a public which has not the discrimination to perceive what offends the artist and man of taste; and he is also hampered by the workman, who naturally works in the groove to which he is accustomed, and in accordance with the exigencies of trade, which demand the use of mechanical processes to supersede labour.

To trace the evil in this way to its source does not, however, supply us with a remedy. I proceed now briefly to consider in what directions we are to look for an improvement on the state of things I have been describing.

And first I should hope for the most beneficial results from the personal supervision of artists of cultivated tastes over the manufacture of the objects of our daily life. A strong feeling for the higher forms of art has

never existed in this country, or, I should say rather, the artistic faculty has never in our race risen of its own accord towards the higher forms of art. Except in architecture we have never produced any works of higher art; we have never had of indigenous growth anything in the shape of those schools of painting, sculpture, and metal-work which sprang out of the native soil in Flanders, to say nothing of Italy. All the higher forms of art have been imported into England either by foreign artists coming to work for our native princes, or by men of taste and culture. Until within the last hundred years there was no such thing as a school of painting in England at all. But there did exist in England till lately, what indeed was common to all the world, the sentiment and tradition of excellence in such more homely forms of art as are applied to household furniture and fittings; and such a feeling took of course an English development, which gave its own character to the work produced. Now what I wish to call your attention to is, that this tradition having died out through the causes I have mentioned, and the circumstances under which works of art and manufacture are produced, and matters having arrived at the dead-lock described above, so that, except in a few solitary cases, it may be said that an object of industrial art is *never* now produced which is satisfactory to the cultivated eye from every point of view—what I desire to point out is,

that only through the determination and energy, and to a certain extent the self-sacrifice, of those who are capable of directing the public taste—that is, of artists and men of culture—can an improvement be considered possible.

There has been a great effort in this direction made of late years. The firm of which Mr. William Morris is the head, of which indeed he is now the sole member, started the idea, now well understood, that the only possible means of producing work which shall be satisfactory from every side, is to return to the principles on which all works of art and art-manufacture were executed, not only in the Middle Ages, but at all epochs up to the beginning of this century. That is, it was intended that the leading spirit of the firm should be not merely a contractor for the work of others, looking to the public to guide his taste, but himself an artist, not only with the power to direct the craftsmen who work under him, but with skill and taste to produce designs, and knowledge not only of the æsthetic but of the practical side of the craft. Such a knowledge and skill Mr. Morris undoubtedly possesses, and there is no less doubt in my mind that from under his direction have proceeded the only thoroughly satisfactory works of decorative industrial art which have been done in this country since the decay of the tradition of sound work. And he has not done this without the determination and energy I have spoken of, nor without

a considerable amount of self-sacrifice both of time and money. Since this experiment has been set on foot the movement has become more general; so general in fact that it may be said now to have become a matter of fashion. Many imitations, more or less successful, of this experiment have been made which are perfectly genuine; but there are many more which are only meant to catch the public taste while it runs in this direction. We have evidence of this in the numerous firms which advertise art-furniture, art-pottery, art-needlework, &c. &c., some of which no doubt are sufficiently in earnest, while others merely trade on the cant of the day, to pass off furniture and other fabrics as bad in design and construction as any that were produced before this movement took place, and infinitely worse in taste. The influence of the designs which have proceeded from Mr. Morris's firm has been immense, and has affected the productions of many who no doubt imagine themselves quite free from it; for I trace, or fancy I trace it, in the works of men most opposed in taste and principle; but the effect on the large mass of manufacturers has only been that they have followed the fashion, and caught a few tricks which they repeat in a servile manner, without having in the least understood or seized the spirit. It is the characteristic indeed of men of genius to be perpetually surprising their imitators, and there is no fear of a "Morris style" being adopted

which shall ever outdo him on his own ground. It is to be hoped that the success of this experiment may not be so much a matter of fashion as to leave no lasting trace, and it will be the fault not only of the public but of the artists themselves if this is the case.

It will of course be quite understood that if I refer at this length to the work Mr. Morris has done, it is not with any view of bringing his name forward, for he is fortunately by this time too well known to require aid from anything I can say. It is because I have a firm conviction that it is only by some such devotion on the part of artists themselves that the degrading tendency of mechanism and all its accompaniments may be counteracted; and only through such practical application of knowledge and skill can the taste of the public, which has more influence for good or for evil in this country than in any other, ever be really improved.

To pass on to another point, it may be said that the increasing spread of the education which every year is being more widely diffused, and in which the teaching of drawing is encouraged by Government grants, must gradually infuse a spirit of art and a love of beauty; and what is still more important, a hatred of ugliness, and a capacity for distinguishing the true from the vulgar and pretentious. I believe that it may have a limited effect in this direction. It is not to be supposed, however, that to teach the

rudiments of geometry and perspective and elementary free-hand drawing to so many thousands of children, will turn them at once into artists, or even give them any artistic instincts. But it will act as other elementary education acts—give a chance of cultivation to some receptive natures which might otherwise remain undeveloped. These elementary stages in art indeed can hardly be said to be art at all; and those who complain that free-hand drawing is dull and tedious work for children, and that they should be taught to work at once from nature so as to have interest in their subject, do not understand the reasons for this system. In the first place, the authorities well understand that to make geometrical and free-hand drawings can no more be called studying art than learning the alphabet can be said to be studying literature, both being the necessary preliminary stages to a higher culture; and in the second place, where drawing is only a small portion of the course of elementary education, and is carried on for a very limited time in places where perhaps hundreds of school children are learning, it is necessary to give the instruction in the most convenient and handy form. There are the art schools for the further development of those whose taste or talent impels them to further study in this direction; and I may add that a constant effort is being made so to arrange the Government payments to the masters, that there shall be the necessary inducement to lead the

pupils from one stage to another—a matter which would be easy enough if the supplies were unlimited, but which is difficult when they have to be kept within bounds. It is in this way then that I hope the influence of the vast machinery of the Art Department may be felt; that is, through the chances given to children of turning their attention to art if their inclinations lie that way, through the inducements to study offered by the art classes and art schools, and through the final inducements to enter into training at South Kensington as art masters, and in turn diffuse their knowledge through the country.

There is, however, another great piece of machinery which runs no such risks, and by which the truest principles of taste may be diffused among all classes. I refer to the institution and formation of museums. Here again do not let us deceive ourselves as to the influence they may exercise. Without previous culture no one is likely to appreciate a work of high art; the richness and splendour of workmanship and material in a cup by Cellini will please an uneducated eye, but it needs a long apprenticeship in general and special study for the appreciation of the exquisite taste and fancy which has guided the artist. Mr. Morley, in a speech on education, lately asked why the collection of Castellani jewels at the British Museum should not be sent to Birmingham, to improve the taste of the jewellers. If it was in the least probable

that the goldsmiths and jewellers would take to heart the lesson that those wonderful specimens of Greek art might teach them, the lesson which I have tried to inculcate in this paper—viz., that exquisite workmanship is the essence of all fine art manufacture, and of jewellery above all things—no risk perhaps would be too great to run in the cause; but it is far too probable that the only result would be the "cribbing" of a few of the forms to produce a novelty, and the executing them in a more or less coarse and barbarous manner. It must be remembered, too, that museums have another important function besides the circulation through the provinces of fine specimens of art and workmanship, and that is the preservation of those inestimably precious relics of antiquity which no money or labour could ever restore to us if once lost or destroyed. After this has been taken into account, there can be no doubt that the exhibition and circulation of objects of art is of great importance, and cannot but have a refining and educating effect on those whose tastes are sufficiently raised by cultivation to appreciate them; indeed, to supply the local museums and art schools with the best specimens available, is one of the most important functions of the South Kensington Museum.

If I have explained myself in these remarks, it will be understood that I see three ways in which the influence of art may be brought to bear on our social

system — through the return, if only in part, to that bygone excellence of workmanship which, for reasons that I have dwelt on, and others which I have forborne to discuss, must necessarily be only partial; through the spread of education; and through opportunities afforded to art-students throughout the kingdom of seeing fine works of different periods and styles. All these influences however I have been obliged to confess must be limited in their effect, and we must not deceive ourselves as to the extent to which public taste may be influenced by these means. We have only to think of the immense number amongst us of all classes, from the highest to the lowest, who are utterly indifferent as to whether their surroundings are ugly or beautiful, and who trouble themselves only about personal comfort or luxury according to their degree, to realise how impossible it will be ever to instil into them the most rudimentary ideas upon the subject. We who are interested in these things, though we appear to ourselves to be a large and important section of the community, form but a very small portion of the whole mass of the nation, which is for the most part animated by other interests, indifferent, and in many cases irreconcilably opposed, to the interests of art. We may remember however as an encouragement, that at no time in the world's history, except at that period of the culmination of Greek art which I have referred

to, has a nation been wholly artistic. In Italy, even at the best time, the mass of the people were probably indifferent, and the love of art was confined to artists, artificers, and the cultivated class. It is true that in Florence there seems to have been something like popular enthusiasm when a fine work of art was produced, as in a well-known instance, when Cimabue's picture was carried in procession. It may be doubted however whether this was anything more than an exhibition of enthusiasm among the painter's friends or his guild, taking a form of rejoicing common in those days. And although I have said that I do not see the possibility under existing conditions of so complete a diffusion of taste for art among us as shall make us an artistic race, yet there is no reason why it should not become amongst us, as it was once in Italy, the property at least of the cultivated class and of all art-workmen. Let us never forget, too, that the spirit of art will of itself assist in the increase of this educated class, and in the spread of the cultivation by which it lives.

It may be advisable to add a few words to this paper, left rather incomplete in its latter part. I have frequently in the course of this and other lectures alluded to the dying out of the tradition of good work as a cause of the

degeneracy of workmanship in the present day; and I have referred to certain artists and architects as devoting themselves to restoring this tradition of good work by their individual efforts. It is obvious, however, that unless something like a School is produced by these means, such good work as is done must be very limited, its only influence being traceable in the false and cheap imitations which copy the manner without seizing, or desiring to seize, the spirit. The best counteracting influence, therefore, would be the establishment of schools where good workmanship should be taught. Abroad, the spirit of fine workmanship is not dead. The Paris Exhibition of 1878 proved that in France and Italy all kinds of technical arts are still in as good a condition as ever as regards execution and workmanship, if degenerate in taste and invention. Some carved panels exhibited in the Italian Court, two of which were bought for the South Kensington Museum, were executed in the highest perfection. And in all matters connected with modelling and metal work the French and other nations excel us on every point; it is well known indeed that our most eminent pottery firms and silversmiths employ French workmen. Our plan, therefore, is to establish technical schools under the best foreign teachers that are to be found; and if our manufacturers are not too much under the influence of trade jealousies to allow it, and our mechanics are not too conceited to learn, some good may

be done. One of the City Companies has already given assistance towards the formation of a School of Wood-carving under an Italian artist, which promises the best results; and it would be an admirable thing if others of those rich companies would aid in like manner towards the recovery of those technical arts of which they are the recognised representatives.

THE END.

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